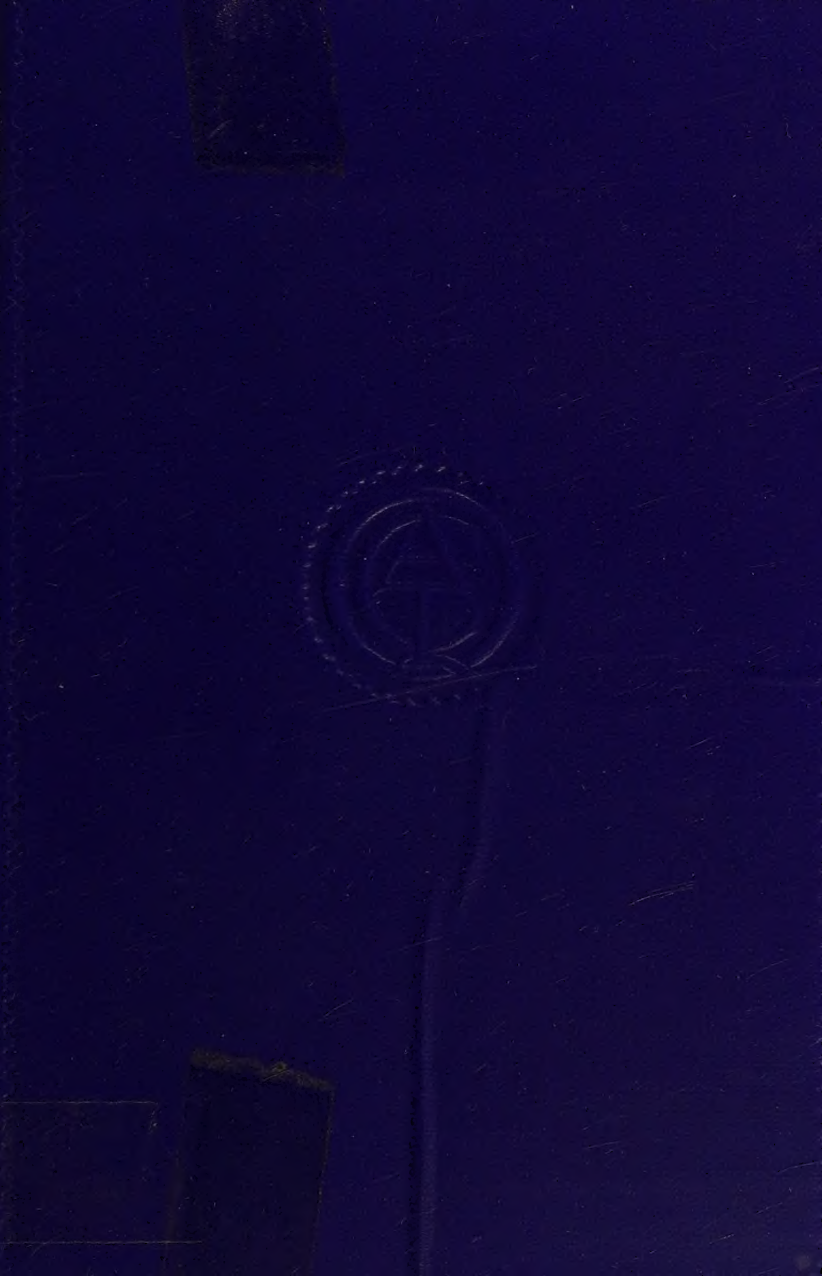

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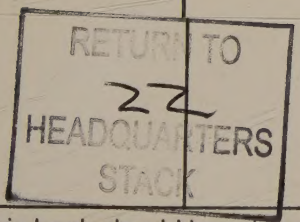

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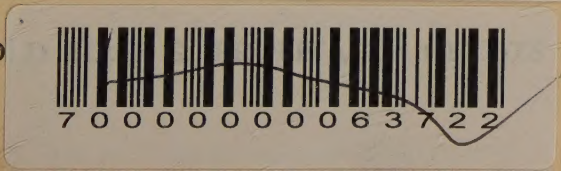

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THE DUCHY ONE AND ALL EDITION

OLD FIRES
PROFITABLE GHOSTS

SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH

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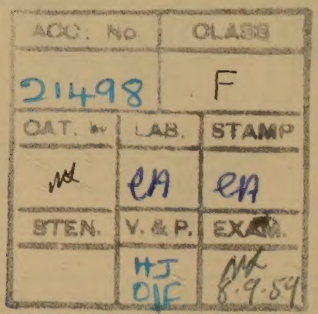

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PREFACE

THE stories in this book are of *revenants*: persons who either in spirit or in body revisit old scenes, return upon old selves or old emotions, or relate a message from a world beyond perception. "Which?" was suggested by a passage in Hawthorne's Notebooks, where he proposes a story or sketch the scene of which is "to be laid within the light of a street lantern; the time, when the lamp is near going out; and the catastrophe to be simultaneous with the last flickering gleam." "The Lady of the Ship" is very nearly historical. "Prisoners of War" rests on the actual adventures of two St. Ives men, Thomas Williams and John Short, in the years 1804–14. "Frozen Margit" and "The Seventh Man" have—if not their originals—at least their suggestions in fact.

One of the tales, "Once Aboard the Lugger," is itself a *revenant*. After writing it in the form here presented, I took advice and gave it another, under the title of "Ia." Yet some whose opinion I value prefer the original; and to satisfy them (though I think them wrong) it is reprinted; not with intent to pad out the volume. But my readers are too generous to need the assurance.

Q.

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OLD FIRES AND PROFITABLE GHOSTS

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OCEANUS

I

My dear Violet,—So you "gather from the tone of two or three recent letters that my spirit is creeping back to light and warmth again"? Well, after a fashion you are right. I shall never laugh again as I used to laugh before Harry's death. The taste has gone out of that carelessness, and I turn even from the remembrance of it. But I can be cheerful, with a cheerfulness which has found the centre of gravity. I am myself again, as people say. After months of agitation in what seemed to be chaos the lost atom has dropped back to its place in the scheme of things, and even aspires (poor mite!) to do its infinitesimal business intelligently. So might a mote in a sunbeam feel itself at one with God.

But when you assume that my recovery has been a gradual process, you are wrong. You will think me more than ever deranged; but I assure you that it has been brought about, not by long strivings, but suddenly —without preparation of mine—*and by the immediate hand of our dead brother.*

Yes; you shall have the whole tale. The first effect of the news of Harry's death in October last was simply

to stun me. You may remember how once, years ago, when we were children, we rode home together across the old Racecourse after a long day's skating, our skates swinging at our saddle-bows; how Harry challenged us to a gallop; and how, midway, the roan mare slipped down neck over crop on a rabbit-hole in the frozen turf and hurled me clean against the face of a stone dyke. I had been thrown more than once before, but somehow had always found the earth fairly elastic. So I had griefs before Harry died, and took some rebound of hope from each: but that cast repeated in a worse degree the old shock—the springless brutal jar —of the stone dyke. With him the sun went out of my sky.

I understand that this torpor is quite common with men and women suddenly bereaved. I believe that a whole week passed before my brain recovered any really vital motion; and then such feeble thought as I could exert was wholly occupied with the desperate stupidity of the whole affair. If God were indeed shaping the world to any end, if any design of His underlay the activities of men, what insensate waste to quench such a heart and brain as Harry's!—to nip, as it seemed out of mere blundering wantonness, a bud which had begun to open so generously: to sacrifice that youth and strength, that comeliness, that enthusiasm, and all for nothing! Had some campaign claimed him, had he been spent to gain a citadel or defend a flag, I had understood. But that he should be killed on a friendly mission; attacked in ignorance by those East Coast savages while bearing gifts to their king; deserted by the porters whose comfort (on their own confession) he had studied throughout the march;

left to die, to be tortured, mutilated—and all for no possible good: these things I could not understand. At the end he might have escaped; but as he caught hold of his saddle by the band between the holsters, it parted: it was not leather, but faced paper, the job of some cheating contractor. I thought of this, too. And Harry had been through Chitral!

But though a man may hate, he cannot easily despise God for long. "He is great—but wasteful," said the American. We are the dust on His great hands, and fly as He claps them carelessly in the pauses of His work. Yet this theory would not do at all: for the unlucky particles are not dust, not refuse, but exquisite and exquisitely fashioned, designed to *live*, and for every small function of life adapted with the minutest care. There were nights indeed when, walking along the shore where we had walked together on the night before Harry left England, and looking from the dark waters which divided me from his grave up to the nightly moon and to the stars around her, I could well believe God wasteful of little things. Sirius flashing low, Orion's belt with the great nebula swinging like a pendant of diamonds; the ruby stars, Betelgueux and Aldebaran—my eyes went up beyond these to Perseus shepherding the Kids westward along the Milky Way. From the right Andromeda flashed signals to him: and above sat Cassiopeia, her mother, resting her jewelled wrists on the arms of her throne. Low in the east Jupiter trailed his satellites in the old moon's path. As they all moved, silent, looking down on me out of the hollow spaces of the night, I could believe no splendid waste too costly for their perfection: and the Artificer who hung them there after millions of

years of patient effort, if more intelligible than a God who produced them suddenly at will, certainly not less divine. But walking the same shore by daylight I recognised that the shells, the mosses, the flowers I trampled on, were, each in its way, as perfect as those great stars: that on these—and on Harry—as surely as on the stars—God had spent, if not infinite pains, then at least so superlative a wisdom that to conceive of them as wastage was to deny the mind which called them forth.

There they were: and that He who had skill to create them could blunder in using them was simply incredible.

But this led to worse: for having to admit the infallible design, I now began to admire it as an exquisite scheme of evil, and to accuse God of employing supreme knowledge and skill to gratify a royal lust of cruelty. For a month and more this horrible theory justified itself in all innocent daily sights. Throughout my country walks I "saw blood." I heard the rabbit run squeaking before the weasel; I watched the butcher crow working steadily down the hedge. If I turned seaward I looked beneath the blue and saw the dog-fish gnawing on the whiting. If I walked in the garden I surprised the thrush dragging worms from the turf, the cat slinking on the nest, the spider squatting in ambush. Behind the rosy face of every well-nourished child I saw a lamb gazing up at the butcher's knife. My dear Violet, that was a hideous time!

And just then by chance a book fell into my hands—Lamartine's *Chûte d'un Ange*. Do you know the Seventh and Tenth Visions of that poem, which describe the favourite amusements of the Men-gods? Before the Deluge, beyond the rude tents of the nomad

shepherds, there rose city upon city of palaces built of jasper and porphyry, splendid and utterly corrupt; inhabited by men who called themselves gods and explored the subtleties of all sciences to minister to their vicious pleasures. At ease on soft couches, in hanging gardens set with fountains, these beings feasted with every refinement of cruelty. Kneeling slaves were their living tables; while for their food—

Tous les oiseaux de l'air, tous les poissons de l'onde,
Tout ce qui vole ou nage ou rampe dans le monde,
Mourant pour leur plaisir des plus cruels trépas
De sanglantes saveurs composent leurs repas. . . .

In these lines I believed that I discerned the very God of the universe, the God whom men worship—

Dans les infâmes jeux de leur divin loisir
Le supplice de l'homme est leur premier plaisir
Pour que leur œil féroce à l'envi s'en repaisse
Des bourreaux devant eux en immolent sans cesse.
Tantôt ils font lutter, dans des combats affreux,
L'homme contre la brute et les hommes entre eux,
Aux longs ruisseaux de sang qui coulent de la veine,
Aux palpitations des membres sur l'arène,
Se levant à demi de leurs lits de repos
Des frissons de plaisir frémissent sur leurs peaux.
Le cri de la torture est leur douce harmonie,
Et leur œil dans son œil boit sa lente agonie.

I charged the Supreme Power with a cruelty deliberate, ruthless, serene. Nero the tyrant once commanded a representation in grim earnest of the Flight of Icarus; and the unhappy boy who took the part, at his first attempt to fly, fell headlong beside the Emperor's couch and spattered him with blood and brains. For

the Emperor, says Suetonius, *perraro praesidere, ceterum accubans, parvis primum foraminibus, deinde toto podio adaperto, spectare consuerat.* So I believed that on the stage of this world men agonised for the delight of one cruel intelligence which watched from behind the curtain of a private box.

II

In this unhappy condition of mind, then, I was lying in my library chair here at Sevenhays, at two o'clock on the morning of January 4th. I had just finished another reading of the Tenth Vision and had tossed my book into the lap of an arm-chair opposite. Fire and lamp were burning brightly. The night outside was still and soundless, with a touch of frost.

I lay there, retracing in thought the circumstances of Harry's last parting from me, and repeating to myself a scrap here and there from the three letters he wrote on his way — the last of them, full of high spirits, received a full three weeks after the telegram which announced his death. There was a passage in this last letter describing a wonderful ride he had taken alone and by moonlight on the desert; a ride (he protested) which wanted nothing of perfect happiness but me, his friend, riding beside him to share his wonder. There was a sentence which I could not recall precisely, and I left my chair and was crossing the room towards the drawer in the writing-table where I kept his letters, when I heard a trampling of hoofs on the gravel outside, and then my Christian name called—with distinctness, but not at all loudly.

I went to the window, which was unshuttered; drew up the blind and flung up the sash. The moon, in its third quarter and about an hour short of its meridian, shone over the deodars upon the white gravel. And there, before the front door, sat Harry on his sorrel mare Vivandière, holding my own Grey Sultan ready bridled and saddled. He was dressed in his old khaki riding-suit, and his face, as he sat askew in his saddle and looked up towards my window, wore its habitual and happy smile.

Now, call this and what follows a dream, vision, hallucination, what you will; but understand, please, that from the first moment, so far as I considered the matter at all, I had never the least illusion that this was Harry in flesh and blood. I knew quite well all the while that Harry was dead and his body in his grave. But, soul or phantom—whatever relation to Harry this might bear—it had come to me, and the great joy of that was enough for the time. There let us leave the question. I closed the window, went upstairs to my dressing-room, drew on my riding-boots and overcoat, found cap, gloves and riding-crop, and descended to the porch.

Harry, as I shall call him, was still waiting there on the off-side of Grey Sultan, the farther side from the door. There could be no doubt, at any rate, that the grey was real horseflesh and blood, though he seemed unusually quiet after two days in stall. Harry freed him as I mounted, and we set off together at a walk, which we kept as far as to the gate.

Outside we took the westward road, and our horses broke into a trot. As yet we had not exchanged a word; but now he asked a question or two about his

people and his friends; kindly, yet most casually, as one might who returns after a week's holidaying. I answered as well as I could, with trivial news of their health. His mother had borne the winter better than usual—to be sure, there had been as yet no cold weather to speak of; but she and Ethel intended, I believed, to start for the south of France early in February. He inquired about you. His comments were such as a man makes on hearing just what he expects to hear, or knows beforehand. And for some time it seemed to be tacitly taken for granted between us that I should ask him no questions.

"As for me——" I began, after a while.

He checked the mare's pace a little. "I know," he said, looking straight ahead between her ears; then, after a pause, "it has been a bad time for you. You are in a bad way altogether. That is why I came."

"But it was for *you*!" I blurted out. "Harry, if only I had known why *you* were taken—and what it was to *you*!"

He turned his face to me with the old confident comforting smile.

"Don't you trouble about *that*. *That's* nothing to make a fuss about. Death?" he went on musing—our horses had fallen to a walk again—"It looks you in the face a moment: you put out your hands: you touch—and so it is gone. My dear boy, it isn't for *us* that you need worry!"

"For whom, then?"

"Come," said he, and he shook Vivandière into a canter.

III

I cannot remember precisely at what point in our ride the country had ceased to be familiar. But by and by we were climbing the lower slopes of a great down which bore no resemblance to the pastoral country around Sevenhays. We had left the beaten road for short turf—apparently of a copper-brown hue, but this may have been the effect of the moonlight. The ground rose steadily, but with an easy inclination, and we climbed with the wind at our backs; climbed, as it seemed, for an hour, or maybe two, at a footpace, keeping silence. The happiness of having Harry beside me took away all desire for speech.

This at least was my state of mind as we mounted the long lower slopes of the down. But in time the air, hitherto so exhilarating, began to oppress my lungs, and the tranquil happiness to give way to a vague discomfort and apprehension.

"What is this noise of water running?"

I reined up Grey Sultan as I put the question. At the same moment it occurred to me that this sound of water, distant and continuous, had been running in my ear for a long while.

Harry, too, came to a halt. With a sweep of the arm that embraced the dim landscape around and ahead, he quoted softly—

> ἐν δ' ἐτίθει ποταμοῖο μέγα σθένος Ὠκεανοῖο
> ἄντυγα πὰρ πυμάτην σάκεος πύκα ποιητοῖο . . .

and was silent again.

I recalled at once and distinctly the hot summer

morning ten years back, when we had prepared that passage of the Eighteenth Book together in our study at Clifton; I at the table, Harry lolling in the cane-seated arm-chair with the Liddell and Scott open on his knees; outside, the sunny close and the fresh green of the lime-trees.

Now that I looked more attentively the bare down, on which we climbed like flies, did indeed resemble a vast round shield, about the rim of which this unseen water echoed. And the resemblance grew more startling when, a mile or so farther on our way, as the grey dawn overtook us, Harry pointed upwards and ahead to a small boss or excrescence now lifting itself above the long curve of the horizon.

At first I took it for a hummock or tumulus. Then, as the day whitened about us, I saw it to be a building —a tall, circular barrack not unlike the Colosseum. A question shaped itself on my lips, but something in Harry's manner forbade it. His gaze was bent steadily forward, and I kept my wonder to myself, and also the oppression of spirit which had now grown to something like physical torture.

When first the great barrack broke into sight we must have been at least two miles distant. I kept my eyes fastened on it as we approached, and little by little made out the details of its architecture. From base to summit—which appeared to be roofless—six courses of many hundred arches ran around the building, one above the other; and between each pair a course, as it seemed, of plain worked stone, though I afterwards found it to be sculptured in low relief. The arches were cut in deep relief and backed with undressed stone. The lowest course of all, however, was quite

plain, having neither arches nor frieze; but at intervals corresponding to the eight major points of the compass —so far as I who saw but one side of it could judge —pairs of gigantic stone figures supported archways pierced in the wall; or sluices, rather, since from every archway but one a full stream of water issued and poured down the sides of the hill. The one dry archway was that which faced us with open gate; and towards this one Harry led the way; for oppression and terror now weighted my hand as with lead upon Grey Sultan's rein.

Harry, however, rode forward resolutely, dismounted almost in the very shadow of the great arch, and waited, smoothing his mare's neck. But for the invitation in his eyes, which were solemn, yet without a trace of fear, I had never dared that last hundred yards. For above the rush of waters I heard now a confused sound within the building—the thud and clanking of heavy machinery, and at intervals a human groan; and looking up I saw that the long friezes in bas-relief represented men and women tortured and torturing with all conceivable variety of method and circumstance—flayed, racked, burned, torn asunder, loaded with weights, pinched with hot irons, and so on without end. And it added to the horror of these sculptures that while the limbs and even the dress of each figure were carved with elaborate care and nicety of detail, the faces of all—of those who applied the torture and of those who looked on, as well as of the sufferers themselves—were left absolutely blank. On the same plan the two Titans beside the great archway had no faces. The sculptor had traced the muscles of each belly in a constriction of anguish, and had suggested this anguish

again in moulding the neck, even in disposing the hair of the head; but the neck supported, and the locks fell around, a space of smooth stone without a feature.

Harry allowed me no time to feed on these horrors. Signing to me to dismount and leave Grey Sultan at the entrance, he led me through the long archway or tunnel. At the end we paused again; he watching, while I drew difficult breath. . . .

I saw a vast amphitheatre of granite, curving away on either hand and reaching up, tier on tier, till the tiers melted in the grey sky overhead. The lowest tier stood twenty feet above my head; yet curved with so lordly a perspective that on the far side of the arena, as I looked across, it seemed almost level with the ground; while the human figures about the great archway yonder were diminished to the size of ants about a hole. . . . For there were human figures busy in the arena, though not a soul sat in any of the granite tiers above. A million eyes had been less awful than those empty benches staring down in the cold dawn; bench after bench repeating the horror of the featureless carvings by the entrance-gate — repeating it in series without end, and unbroken, save at one point midway along the semicircle on my right, where the imperial seat stood out, crowned like a catafalque with plumes of purple horse-hair, and screened close with heavy purple hangings. I saw these curtains shake once or twice in the morning wind.

The floor of this amphitheatre I have spoken of as an arena; but as a matter of fact it was laid with riveted sheets of copper that recalled the dead men's shelves in the Paris *morgue*. The centre had been raised some few feet higher than the circumference, or possibly the

whole floor took its shape from the rounded hill of which it was the apex; and from an open sluice immediately beneath the imperial throne a flood of water gushed with a force that carried it straight to this raised centre, over which it ran and rippled, and so drained back into the scuppers at the circumference. Before reaching the centre it broke and swirled around a row of what appeared to be tall iron boxes or cages, set directly in face of the throne. But for these ugly boxes the whole floor was empty. To and from these the little human figures were hurrying, and from these too proceeded the thuds and panting and the frequent groans that I had heard outside.

While I stood and gazed, Harry stepped forward into the arena. "This also?" I whispered.

He nodded, and led the way over the copper floor, where the water ran high as our ankles and again was drained off, until little dry spaces grew like maps upon the surface, and in ten seconds were flooded again. He led me straight to the cages; and I saw that, while the roof and three sides of these were of sheet iron, the fourth side, which faced the throne, lay open. And I saw—in the first cage, a man scourged with rods; in the second, a body twisted on the rack; in the third, a woman with a starving babe, and a fellow that held food to them and withdrew it quickly (the torturers wore masks on their faces, and whenever blood flowed some threw handfuls of sawdust, and blood and sawdust together were carried off by the running water); in the fourth cage, a man tied, naked and helpless, whom a masked torturer pelted with disks of gold, heavy and keen-edged; in the fifth a brasier with irons heating, and a girl's body crouched in a corner——

"I will see no more!" I cried, and turned towards the great purple canopy. High over it the sun broke yellow on the climbing tiers of seats. "Harry! someone is watching behind those curtains! Is it—HE?"

Harry bent his head.

"But this is all that I believed! This is Nero, and ten times worse than Nero! Why did you bring me here?" I flung out my hand towards the purple throne, and finding myself close to a fellow who scattered sawdust with both hands, made a spring to tear his mask away. But Harry stretched out an arm.

"That will not help you," he said. "The man has no face."

"No face!"

"He once had a face, but it has perished. His was the face of these sufferers. Look at them."

I looked from cage to cage, and now saw that indeed all these sufferers—men and women—had but one face: the same wrung brow, the same wistful eyes, the same lips bitten in anguish. I knew the face. *We all know it.*

"His own Son! O devil rather than God!" I fell on my knees in the gushing water and covered my eyes.

"Stand up, listen and look!" said Harry's voice.

"What can I see? He hides behind that curtain."

"And the curtain?"

"It shakes continually."

"*That is with His sobs.* Listen! What of the water?"

"It runs from the throne and about the floor. It washes off the blood."

"*That water is His tears.* It flows hence down the hill, and washes all the shores of earth."

Then as I stood silent, conning the eddies at my feet, for the first time Harry took my hand.

"Learn this," he said. "There is no suffering in the world but ultimately comes to be endured by God."

Saying this, he drew me from the spot; gently, very gently led me away; but spoke again as we were about to pass into the shadow of the arch—

"Look once back: for a moment only."

I looked. The curtains of the imperial seat were still drawn close, but in a flash I saw the tiers beside it, and around, and away up to the sunlit crown of the amphitheatre, thronged with forms in white raiment. And all these forms leaned forward and bowed their faces on their arms and wept.

So we passed out beneath the archway. Grey Sultan stood outside, and as I mounted him the gate clashed behind. . . .

IV

I turned as it clashed. And the gate was just the lodge-gate of Sevenhays. And Grey Sultan was trampling the gravel of our own drive. The morning sun slanted over the laurels on my right, and while I wondered, the stable clock struck eight.

The rest I leave to you; nor shall try to explain. I only know that, vision or no vision, my soul from that hour has gained a calm it never knew before. The sufferings of my fellows still afflict me. But always, if I stand still and listen, in my own room, or in a crowded street, or in a waste spot among the moors, I can hear those waters moving round the world—moving on their "priest-like task"—those lustral divine tears which are Oceanus.

THE SEVENTH MAN

In a one-roomed hut, high within the Arctic Circle, and only a little south of the eightieth parallel, six men were sitting — much as they had sat, evening after evening, for months. They had a clock, and by it they divided the hours into day and night. As a matter of fact, it was always night. But the clock said half-past eight, and they called the time evening.

The hut was built of logs, with an inner skin of rough match-boarding, daubed with pitch. It measured seventeen feet by fourteen; but opposite the door four bunks—two above and two below—took a yard off the length, and this made the interior exactly square. Each of these bunks had two doors, with brass latches on the inner side; so that the owner, if he chose, could shut himself up and go to sleep in a sort of cupboard. But as a rule, he closed one of them only—that by his feet. The other swung back, with its brass latch showing. The men kept these latches in a high state of polish.

Across the angle of the wall, to the left of the door, and behind it when it opened, three hammocks were slung, one above another. No one slept in the uppermost.

But the feature of the hut was its fire-place; and this was merely a square hearthstone, raised slightly above the floor, in the middle of the room. Upon it, and upon a growing mountain of soft grey ash, the fire burned always. It had no chimney, and so the men lost none of its warmth. The smoke ascended steadily and spread

itself under the blackened beams and roof-boards in dense blue layers. But about eighteen inches beneath the spring of the roof there ran a line of small trap-doors with sliding panels, to admit the cold air, and below these the room was almost clear of smoke. A new-comer's eyes might have smarted, but these men stitched their clothes and read in comfort. To keep the up-draught steady they had plugged every chink and crevice in the match-boarding below the trap-doors with moss, and payed the seams with pitch. The fire they fed from a stack of drift and wreck-wood piled to the right of the door, and fuel for the fetching strewed the frozen beach outside—whole trees notched into lengths by lumberers' axes and washed thither from they knew not what continent. But the wreck-wood came from their own ship, the *J. R. MacNeill*, which had brought them from Dundee.

They were Alexander Williamson, of Dundee, better known as The Gaffer; David Faed, also of Dundee; George Lashman, of Cardiff; Long Ede, of Hayle, in Cornwall; Charles Silchester, otherwise The Snipe, of Ratcliff Highway or thereabouts; and Daniel Cooney, shipped at Tromsö six weeks before the wreck, an Irish-American by birth and of no known address.

The Gaffer reclined in his bunk, reading by the light of a smoky and evil-smelling lamp. He had been mate of the *J. R. MacNeill*, and was now captain as well as patriarch of the party. He possessed three books—the Bible, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and an odd volume of *The Turkish Spy*. Just now he was reading *The Turkish Spy*. The lamplight glinted on the rim of his spectacles and on the silvery hairs in his beard, the slack of which he had tucked under the edge of his

blanket. His lips moved as he read, and now and then he broke off to glance mildly at Faed and the Snipe, who were busy beside the fire with a greasy pack of cards; or to listen to the peevish grumbling of Lashman in the bunk below him. Lashman had taken to his bed six weeks before with scurvy, and complained incessantly; and though they hardly knew it, these complaints were wearing his comrades' nerves to fiddle-strings—doing the mischief that cold and bitter hard work and the cruel loneliness had hitherto failed to do. Long Ede lay stretched by the fire in a bundle of skins, reading in his only book, the Bible, open now at the Song of Solomon. Cooney had finished patching a pair of trousers, and rolled himself in his hammock, whence he stared at the roof and the moonlight streaming up there through the little trap-doors and chivvying the layers of smoke. Whenever Lashman broke out into fresh quaverings of self-pity, Cooney's hands opened and shut again, till the nails dug hard into the palm. He groaned at length, exasperated beyond endurance.

"Oh, stow it, George! Hang it all, man! . . ."

He checked himself, sharp and short: repentant, and rebuked by the silence of the others. They were good seamen all, and tender dealing with a sick shipmate was part of their code.

Lashman's voice, more querulous than ever, cut into the silence like a knife—

"That's it. You've thought it for weeks, and now you say it. I've knowed it all along. I'm just an encumbrance, and the sooner you're shut of me the better, says you. You needn't to fret. I'll be soon out of it; out of it—out there, alongside of Bill——"

"Easy there, matey." The Snipe glanced over his shoulder and laid his cards face downward. "Here, let me give the bed a shake up. It'll ease yer."

"It'll make me quiet, you mean. Plucky deal you care about easin' me, any of yer!"

"Get out with yer nonsense! Dan didn' mean it." The Snipe slipped an arm under the invalid's head and rearranged the pillow of skins and gunny-bags.

"He didn't, didn't he? Let him say it then. . . ."

The Gaffer read on, his lips moving silently. Heaven knows how he had acquired this strayed and stained and filthy little demi-octavo with the arms of Saumarez on its book-plate—"The Sixth Volume of Letters writ by a Turkish Spy, who liv'd Five-and-Forty Years Undiscovered at Paris: Giving an Impartial Account to the *Divan* at *Constantinople* of the most remarkable Transactions of Europe, And discovering several *Intrigues* and *Secrets* of the *Christian* Courts (especially of that of *France*)," etc., etc. "Written originally in *Arabick*. Translated into *Italian*, and from thence into *English* by the Translator of the First Volume. The Eleventh Edition. London: Printed for G. Strahan, S. Ballard"—and a score of booksellers —"MDCCXLI." Heaven knows why he read it; since he understood about one-half, and admired less than one-tenth. The Oriental reflections struck him as mainly blasphemous. But the Gaffer's religious belief marked down nine-tenths of mankind for perdition: which perhaps made him tolerant. At any rate, he read on gravely between the puffs of his short clay—

"*On the 19th of this Moon, the King and the whole Court were present at a Ballet, representing the grandeur of the* French *monarchy. About the Middle of the En-*

tertainment, there was an Antique Dance perform'd by twelve Masqueraders, in the suppos'd form of Dæmons. *But before they had advanc'd far in their Dance, they found an Interloper amongst 'em, who by encreasing the Number to thirteen, put them quite out of their Measure: For they practise every Step and Motion beforehand, till they are perfect. Being abash'd therefore at the unavoidable Blunders the thirteenth Antique made them commit, they stood still like Fools, gazing at one another: None daring to unmask, or speak a Word; for that would have put all the Spectators into a Disorder and Confusion.* Cardinal Mazarini (*who was the chief Contriver of these Entertainments, to divert the King from more serious Thoughts*) *stood close by the young Monarch, with the Scheme of the Ballet in his Hand. Knowing therefore that this Dance was to consist but of twelve Antiques, and taking notice that there were actually thirteen, he at first imputed it to some Mistake. But, afterwards, when he perceived the Confusion of the Dancers, he made a more narrow Enquiry into the Cause of this Disorder. To be brief, they convinced the* Cardinal *that it could be no Error of theirs, by a kind of Demonstration, in that they had but twelve Antique Dresses of that sort, which were made on purpose for this particular Ballet. That which made it seem the greater Mystery was, that when they came behind the Scenes to uncase, and examine the Matter, they found but twelve Antiques, whereas on the Stage there were thirteen . . .*"

"Let him say it. Let him say he didn't mean it, the rotten Irishman!"

Cooney flung a leg wearily over the side of his hammock, jerked himself out, and shuffled across to the sick man's berth.

"Av coorse I didn' mane it. It just took me, ye see, lyin' up yondher and huggin' me thoughts in this —wilderness. I swear to ye, George: and ye'll just wet your throat to show there's no bad blood, and that ye belave me." He took up a pannikin from the floor beside the bunk, pulled a hot iron from the fire, and stirred the frozen drink. The invalid turned his shoulder pettishly. "I didn't mane it," Cooney repeated. He set down the pannikin, and shuffled wearily back to his hammock.

The Gaffer blew a long cloud and stared at the fire; at the smoke mounting and the grey ash dropping; at David Faed dealing the cards and licking his thumb between each. Long Ede shifted from one cramped elbow to another and pushed his Bible nearer the blaze, murmuring, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil our vines."

"Full hand," the Snipe announced.

"Ay." David Faed rolled the quid in his cheek. The cards were so thumbed and tattered that by the backs of them each player guessed pretty shrewdly what the other held. Yet they went on playing night after night; the Snipe shrilly blessing or cursing his luck, the Scotsman phlegmatic as a bolster.

"Play away, man. What ails ye?" he asked.

The Snipe had dropped both hands to his thighs and sat up, stiff and listening.

"Whist! Outside the door. . . ."

All listened. "I hear nothing," said David, after ten seconds.

"Hush, man—listen! There, again. . . ."

They heard now. Cooney slipped down from his hammock, stole to the door and listened, crouching,

with his ear close to the jamb. The sound resembled breathing—or so he thought for a moment. Then it seemed rather as if some creature were softly feeling about the door—fumbling its coating of ice and frozen snow.

Cooney listened. They all listened. Usually, as soon as they stirred from the scorching circle of the fire, their breath came from them in clouds. It trickled from them now in thin wisps of vapour. They could almost hear the soft grey ash dropping on the hearth.

A log spluttered. Then the invalid's voice clattered in—

"It's the bears—the bears! They've come after Bill, and next it'll be my turn. I warned you—I told you he wasn't deep enough. O Lord, have mercy . . . mercy . . .!" He pattered off into a prayer, his voice and teeth chattering.

"Hush!" commanded the Gaffer gently; and Lashman choked on a sob.

"It ain't bears," Cooney reported, still with his ear to the door. "Leastways . . . we've had bears before. The foxes, maybe . . . let me listen."

Long Ede murmured: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes . . ."

"I believe you're right," the Gaffer announced cheerfully. "A bear would snuff louder—though there's no telling. The snow was falling an hour back, and I dessay 'tis pretty thick outside. If 'tis a bear, we don't want him fooling on the roof, and I misdoubt the drift by the north corner is pretty tall by this time. Is he there still?"

"I felt something then . . . through the chink, here . . . like a warm breath. It's gone now. Come here, Snipe, and listen."

"'Breath,' eh? Did it *smell* like bear?"

"I don't know . . . I didn't smell nothing, to notice. Here, put your head down, close."

The Snipe bent his head. And at that moment the door shook gently. All stared; and saw the latch move up, up . . . and falteringly descend on the staple. They heard the click of it.

The door was secured within by two stout bars. Against these there had been no pressure. The men waited in a silence that ached. But the latch was not lifted again.

The Snipe, kneeling, looked up at Cooney. Cooney shivered and looked at David Faed. Long Ede, with his back to the fire, softly shook his feet free of the rugs. His eyes searched for the Gaffer's face. But the old man had drawn back into the gloom of his bunk, and the lamplight shone only on a grey fringe of beard. He saw Long Ede's look, though, and answered it quietly as ever.

"Take a brace of guns aloft, and fetch us a look round. Wait, if there's a chance of a shot. The trap works. I tried it this afternoon with the small chisel."

Long Ede lit his pipe, tied down the ear-pieces of his cap, lifted a light ladder off its staples, and set it against a roof-beam: then, with the guns under his arm, quietly mounted. His head and shoulders wavered and grew vague to sight in the smoke-wreaths. "Heard anything more?" he asked. "Nothing since," answered the Snipe. With his shoulder Long Ede pushed up the trap. They saw his head framed in a panel of moonlight, with one frosty star above it. He was wriggling through. "Pitch him up a sleeping-bag, somebody," the Gaffer ordered, and Cooney ran with

one. "Thank 'ee, mate," said Long Ede, and closed the trap.

They heard his feet stealthily crunching the frozen stuff across the roof. He was working towards the eaves overlapping the door. Their breath tightened. They waited for the explosion of his gun. None came. The crunching began again: it was heard down by the very edge of the eaves. It mounted to the blunt ridge overhead; then it ceased.

"He will not have seen aught," David Faed muttered.

"Listen, you. Listen by the door again." They talked in whispers. Nothing; there was nothing to be heard. They crept back to the fire, and stood there warming themselves, keeping their eyes on the latch. It did not move. After a while Cooney slipped off to his hammock; Faed to his bunk, alongside Lashman's. The Gaffer had picked up his book again. The Snipe laid a couple of logs on the blaze, and remained beside it, cowering, with his arms stretched out as if to embrace it. His shapeless shadow wavered up and down on the bunks behind him; and, across the fire, he still stared at the latch.

Suddenly the sick man's voice quavered out—

"It's not him they want—it's Bill! They're after Bill, out there! That was Bill trying to get in. . . . Why didn't yer open? It was Bill, I tell yer!"

At the first word the Snipe had wheeled right-about-face, and stood now, pointing, and shaking like a man with ague.

"Matey . . . for the love of God . . ."

"I won't hush. There's something wrong here to-night. I can't sleep. It's Bill, I tell yer! See his poor hammock up there shaking. . . ."

Cooney tumbled out with an oath and a thud. "Hush it, you white-livered swine! Hush it, or by——" His hand went behind him to his knife-sheath.

"Dan Cooney,"—the Gaffer closed his book and leaned out—"go back to your bed."

"I won't, Sir. Not unless——"

"Go back."

"Flesh and blood——"

"Go back." And for the third time that night Cooney went back.

The Gaffer leaned a little farther over the ledge, and addressed the sick man.

"George, I went to Bill's grave not six hours agone. The snow on it wasn't even disturbed. Neither beast nor man, but only God, can break up the hard earth he lies under. I tell you that, and you may lay to it. Now go to sleep."

* * * * *

Long Ede crouched on the frozen ridge of the hut, with his feet in the sleeping-bag, his knees drawn up, and the two guns laid across them. The creature, whatever its name, that had tried the door, was nowhere to be seen; but he decided to wait a few minutes on the chance of a shot; that is, until the cold should drive him below. For the moment the clear tingling air was doing him good. The truth was Long Ede had begun to be afraid of himself, and the way his mind had been running for the last forty-eight hours upon green fields and visions of spring. As he put it to himself, something inside his head was melting. Biblical texts chattered within him like running brooks, and as they fleeted he could almost smell the blown

meadow-scent. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes . . . for our vines have tender grapes. . . . A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. . . . Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south . . . blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. . . ." He was light-headed, and he knew it. He must hold out. They were all going mad; were, in fact, three parts crazed already, all except the Gaffer. And the Gaffer relied on him as his right-hand man. One glimpse of the returning sun—one glimpse only—might save them yet.

He gazed out over the frozen hills, and northward across the ice-pack. A few streaks of pale violet—the ghost of the Aurora—fronted the moon. He could see for miles. Bear or fox, no living creature was in sight. But who could tell what might be hiding behind any one of a thousand hummocks? He listened. He heard the slow grinding of the ice-pack off the beach: only that. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes. . . ."

This would never do. He must climb down and walk briskly, or return to the hut. Maybe there was a bear, after all, behind one of the hummocks, and a shot, or the chance of one, would scatter his head clear of these tom-fooling notions. He would have a search round.

What was that, moving . . . on a hummock, not five hundred yards away? He leaned forward to gaze.

Nothing now: but he had seen something. He lowered himself to the eaves by the north corner, and from the eaves to the drift piled there. The drift was frozen solid, but for a treacherous crust of fresh snow. His foot slipped upon this, and down he slid of a heap.

Luckily he had been careful to sling the guns tightly

at his back. He picked himself up, and unstrapping one, took a step into the bright moonlight to examine the nipples; took two steps: and stood stock-still.

There, before him, on the frozen coat of snow, was a footprint. No: two, three, four—many footprints: prints of a naked human foot: right foot, left foot, both naked, and blood in each print—a little smear.

It had come, then. He was mad for certain. He saw them: he put his fingers in them; touched the frozen blood. The snow before the door was trodden thick with them—some going, some returning.

"The latch . . . lifted. . . ." Suddenly he recalled the figure he had seen moving upon the hummock, and with a groan he set his face northward and gave chase. Oh, he was mad for certain! He ran like a madman—floundering, slipping, plunging in his clumsy moccasins. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes. . . . My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. . . . I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem . . . I charge you . . . I charge you. . . ."

He ran thus for three hundred yards maybe, and then stopped as suddenly as he had started.

His mates—they must not see these footprints, or they would go mad too: mad as he. No, he must cover them up, all within sight of the hut. And to-morrow he would come alone, and cover those farther afield. Slowly he retraced his steps. The footprints —those which pointed towards the hut and those which pointed away from it—lay close together; and he knelt before each, breaking fresh snow over the hollows and carefully hiding the blood. And now a great happiness filled his heart; interrupted once or twice as he worked

by a feeling that someone was following and watching him. Once he turned northwards and gazed, making a telescope of his hands. He saw nothing, and fell again to his long task.

. . . . . .

Within the hut the sick man cried softly to himself. Faed, the Snipe, and Cooney slept uneasily, and muttered in their dreams. The Gaffer lay awake, thinking. After Bill, George Lashman; and after George . . .? Who next? And who would be the last—the unburied one? The men were weakening fast; their wits and courage coming down at the end with a rush. Faed and Long Ede were the only two to be depended on for a day. The Gaffer liked Long Ede, who was a religious man. Indeed he had a growing suspicion that Long Ede, in spite of some amiable laxities of belief, was numbered among the Elect: or might be, if interceded for. The Gaffer began to intercede for him silently; but experience had taught him that such "wrestlings," to be effective, must be noisy, and he dropped off to sleep with a sense of failure. . . .

The Snipe stretched himself, yawned, and awoke. It was seven in the morning: time to prepare a cup of tea. He tossed an armful of logs on the fire, and the noise awoke the Gaffer, who at once inquired for Long Ede. He had not returned. "Go you up to the roof. The lad must be frozen." The Snipe climbed the ladder, pushed open the trap, and came back, reporting that Long Ede was nowhere to be seen. The old man slipped a jumper over his suits of clothing—already three deep—reached for a gun, and moved to the

door. "Take a cup of something warm to fortify," the Snipe advised. "The kettle won't be five minutes boiling." But the Gaffer pushed up the heavy bolts and dragged the door open.

"What in the . . .! Here, bear a hand, lads!"

Long Ede lay prone before the threshold, his outstretched hands almost touching it, his moccasins already covered out of sight by the powdery snow which ran and trickled incessantly—trickled between his long, dishevelled locks, and over the back of his gloves, and ran in a thin stream past the Gaffer's feet.

They carried him in and laid him on a heap of skins by the fire. They forced rum between his clenched teeth and beat his hands and feet, and kneaded and rubbed him. A sigh fluttered on his lips: something between a sigh and a smile, half seen, half heard. His eyes opened, and his comrades saw that it was really a smile.

"Wot cheer, mate?" It was the Snipe who asked.

"I—I seen . . ." The voice broke off, but he was smiling still.

What had he seen? Not the sun, surely! By the Gaffer's reckoning the sun would not be due for a week or two yet: how many weeks he could not say precisely, and sometimes he was glad enough that he did not know.

They forced him to drink a couple of spoonfuls of rum, and wrapped him up warmly. Each man contributed some of his own bedding. Then the Gaffer called to morning prayers, and the three sound men dropped on their knees with him. Now, whether by reason of their joy at Long Ede's recovery, or because the old man was in splendid voice, they felt their

hearts uplifted that morning with a cheerfulness they had not known for months. Long Ede lay and listened dreamily while the passion of the Gaffer's thanksgiving shook the hut. His gaze wandered over their bowed forms—"The Gaffer, David Faed, Dan Cooney, the Snipe, and—and George Lashman in his bunk, of course—and me." But, then, *who was the seventh?* He began to count. "There's myself—Lashman, in his bunk—David Faed, the Gaffer, the Snipe, Dan Cooney. . . . One, two, three, four—well, but that made *seven*. Then who was the seventh? Was it George who had crawled out of bed and was kneeling there? Decidedly there were five kneeling. No: there was George, plain enough, in his berth, and not able to move. Then who was the stranger? Wrong again: there was no stranger. He knew all these men—they were his mates. Was it—Bill? No, Bill was dead and buried: none of these was Bill, or like Bill. Try again—One, two, three, four, five—and us two sick men, seven. The Gaffer, David Faed, Dan Cooney—have I counted Dan twice? No, that's Dan, yonder to the right, and only one of him. Five men kneeling, and two on their backs: that makes seven every time. Dear God—suppose——"

The Gaffer ceased, and in the act of rising from his knees, caught sight of Long Ede's face. While the others fetched their breakfast-cans, he stepped over, and bent and whispered—

"Tell me. Ye've seen what?"

"Seen?" Long Ede echoed.

"Ay, seen what? Speak low—was it the sun?"

"The s——" But this time the echo died on his lips, and his face grew full of awe uncomprehending. It frightened the Gaffer.

"Ye'll be the better of a snatch of sleep," said he; and was turning to go, when Long Ede stirred a hand under the edge of his rugs.

"Seven . . . count . . ." he whispered.

"Lord, have mercy upon us!" the Gaffer muttered to his beard as he moved away. "Long Ede; gone crazed!"

And yet, though an hour or two ago this had been the worst that could befall, the Gaffer felt unusually cheerful. As for the others, they were like different men, all that day and through the three days that followed. Even Lashman ceased to complain, and, unless their eyes played them a trick, had taken a turn for the better. "I declare, if I don't feel like pitching to sing!" the Snipe announced on the second evening, as much to his own wonder as to theirs. "Then why in thunder don't you strike up?" answered Dan Cooney, and fetched his concertina. The Snipe struck up, then and there—"Villikins and his Dinah"! What is more, the Gaffer looked up from his *Paradise Lost*, and joined in the chorus.

By the end of the second day, Long Ede was up and active again. He went about with a dazed look in his eyes. He was counting, counting to himself, always counting. The Gaffer watched him furtively.

Since his recovery, though his lips moved frequently, Long Ede had scarcely uttered a word. But towards noon on the fourth day he said an extraordinary thing.

"There's that sleeping-bag I took with me the other night. I wonder if 'tis on the roof still. It will be froze pretty stiff by this. You might nip up and see, Snipe, and"—he paused—"if you find it, stow it up yonder on Bill's hammock."

The Gaffer opened his mouth, but shut it again without speaking. The Snipe went up the ladder.

A minute passed; and then they heard a cry from the roof—a cry that fetched them all trembling, choking, weeping, cheering, to the foot of the ladder.

"Boys! boys!—the Sun!"

. . . . . .

Months later—it was June, and even George Lashman had recovered his strength—the Snipe came running with news of the whaling fleet. And on the beach, as they watched the vessels come to anchor, Long Ede told the Gaffer his story. "It was a hall—a hallu—what d'ye call it, I reckon. I was crazed, eh?" The Gaffer's eyes wandered from a brambling hopping about the lichen-covered boulders, and away to the sea-fowl wheeling above the ships: and then came into his mind a tale he had read once in *The Turkish Spy*. "I wouldn't say just that," he answered slowly.

"Anyway," said Long Ede, "I believe the Lord sent a miracle to us to save us all."

"I wouldn't say just that, either," the Gaffer objected. "I doubt it was meant just for you and me, and the rest were presairved, as you might say, incidentally."

THE ROOM OF MIRRORS

A LATE hansom came swinging round the corner into Lennox Gardens, cutting it so fine that the near wheel ground against the kerb and jolted the driver in his little seat. The jingle of bells might have warned me; but the horse's hoofs came noiselessly on the half-frozen snow, which lay just deep enough to hide where the pavement ended and the road began; and, moreover, I was listening to the violins behind the first-floor windows of the house opposite. They were playing the "Wiener Blut."

As it was, I had time enough and no more to skip back and get my toes out of the way. The cabby cursed me. I cursed him back so promptly and effectively that he had to turn in his seat for another shot. The windows of the house opposite let fall their light across his red and astonished face. I laughed, and gave him another volley. My head was hot, though my feet and hands were cold; and I felt equal to cursing down any cabman within the four-mile radius. That second volley finished him. He turned to his reins again and was borne away defeated; the red eyes of his lamps peering back at me like an angry ferret's.

Up in the lighted room shadows of men and women crossed the blinds, and still the "Wiener Blut" went forward.

The devil was in that waltz. He had hold of the violins and was weaving the air with scents and visions —visions of Ascot and Henley; green lawns, gay sun-

shades, midsummer heat, cool rivers flowing, muslins rippled by light breezes; running horses and silken jackets; white tables heaped with roses and set with silver and crystal, jewelled fingers moving in the soft candle-light, bare necks bending, diamonds, odours, bubbles in the wine; blue water and white foam beneath the leaning shadow of sails; hot air flickering over stretches of moorland; blue again—Mediterranean blue—long façades, the din of bands and King Carnival parading beneath showers of blossom:—and all this noise and warmth and scent and dazzle flung out into the frozen street for a beggar's portion. I had gone under.

The door of the house opposite had been free to me once—and not six months ago; freer to me perhaps than to any other. Did I long to pass behind it again? I thrust both hands into my pockets for warmth, and my right hand knocked against something hard. Yes . . . just once. . . .

Suddenly the door opened. A man stood on the threshold for a moment while the butler behind him arranged the collar of his fur overcoat. The high light in the portico flung the shadows of both down the crimson carpet laid on the entrance-steps. Snow had fallen and covered the edges of the carpet, which divided it like a cascade of blood pouring from the hall into the street. And still overhead the "Wiener Blut" went forward.

The man paused in the bright portico, his patent-leather boots twinkling under the lamp's rays on that comfortable carpet. I waited, expecting him to whistle for a hansom. But he turned, gave an order to the butler, and stepping briskly down into the street, made off eastwards. The door closed behind him. He was

the man I most hated in the world. If I had longed to cross the threshold a while back it was to seek him, and for no other reason.

I started to follow him, my hands still in my pockets. The snow muffled our footfalls completely, for as yet the slight north-east wind had frozen but the thinnest crust of it. He was walking briskly, as men do in such weather, but with no appearance of hurry. At the corner of Sloane Street he halted under a lamp, pulled out his watch, consulted it, and lit a cigarette; then set off again up the street towards Knightsbridge.

This halt of his had let me up within twenty paces of him. He never turned his head; but went on, presenting me his back, a target not to be missed. Why not do it now? Better now and here than in a crowded thoroughfare. My right hand gripped the revolver more tightly. No, there was plenty of time: and I was curious to know what had brought Gervase out at this hour: why he had left his guests, or his wife's guests, to take care of themselves: why he chose to be trudging afoot through this infernally unpleasant snow.

The roadway in Sloane Street was churned into a brown mass like chocolate, but the last bus had rolled home and left it to freeze in peace. Half-way up the street I saw Gervase meet and pass a policeman, and altered my own pace to a lagging walk. Even so, the fellow eyed me suspiciously as I went by—or so I thought: and guessing that he kept a watch on me, I dropped still farther behind my man. But the lamps were bright at the end of the street, and I saw him turn to the right by the great drapery shop at the corner.

Once past this corner I was able to put on a spurt. He crossed the roadway by the Albert Gate, and by

the time he reached the Park railings the old distance separated us once more. Half-way up the slope he came to a halt, by the stone drinking-trough: and flattening myself against the railings, I saw him try the thin ice in the trough with his finger-tips, but in a hesitating way, as if his thoughts ran on something else and he scarcely knew what he did or why he did it. It must have been half a minute before he recovered himself with a shrug of his shoulders, and plunging both hands deep in his pockets, resumed his pace.

As we passed Hyde Park Corner I glanced up at the clock there: the time was between a quarter and ten minutes to one. At the entrance of Down Street he turned aside again, and began to lead me a zigzag dance through the quiet thoroughfare: and I followed, still to the tune of the "Wiener Blut."

But now, at the corner of Charles Street, I blundered against another policeman, who flashed his lantern in my face, stared after Gervase, and asked me what my game was. I demanded innocently enough to be shown the nearest way to Oxford Street, and the fellow, after pausing a moment to chew his suspicions, walked with me slowly to the south-west corner of Berkeley Square, and pointed northwards.

"That's your road," he growled, "straight on. And don't you forget it!"

He stood and watched me on my way. Nor did I dare to turn aside until well clear of the square. At the crossing of Davies and Grosvenor Streets, however, I supposed myself safe, and halted for a moment.

From the shadow of a porch at my elbow a thin voice accosted me.

"Kind gentleman——"

"Heh?" I spun round on her sharply: for it was a woman, stretching out one skinny hand and gathering her rags together with the other.

"Kind gentleman, spare a copper! I've known better days—I have indeed."

"Well," said I, "as it happens, I'm in the same case. And they couldn't be much worse, could they?"

She drew a shuddering breath back through her teeth, but still held out her hand. I felt for my last coin, and her fingers closed on it so sharply that their long nails scraped the back of mine.

"Kind gentleman——"

"Ay, they are kind, are they not?"

She stared at me, and in a nerveless tone let one horrible oath escape her.

"There'll be one less before morning," said I, "if that's any consolation to you. Good night!" Setting off at a shuffling run, I doubled back along Grosvenor Street and Bond Street to the point where I hoped to pick up the trail again. And just there, at the issue of Bruton Street, two constables stood ready for me.

"I thought as much," said the one who set me on my way. "Hi, you! Wait a moment, please"; then to the other, "Best turn his pockets out, Jim."

"If you dare to try——" I began, with my hand in my pocket: the next moment I found myself sprawling face downward on the sharp crust of snow.

"Hallo, constables!" said a voice. "What's the row?" It was Gervase. He had turned leisurely back from the slope of Conduit Street, and came strolling down the road with his hands in his pockets.

"This fellow, Sir—we have reason to think he was followin' you."

"Quite right," Gervase answered cheerfully. "Of course he was."

"Oh, if you knew it, Sir——"

"Certainly I knew it. In fact, he was following at my invitation."

"What for did he tell me a lie, then?" grumbled the constable, chapfallen.

I had picked myself up by this time and was wiping my face. "Look here," I put in, "I asked you the way to Oxford Street, that and nothing else." And I went on to summarise my opinion of him.

"Oh! it's you can swear a bit," he growled. "I heard you just now."

"Yes," Gervase interposed suavely, drawing the glove from his right hand and letting flash a diamond finger-ring in the lamp-light. "He *is* a bit of a beast, policeman, and it's not for the pleasure of it that I want his company."

A sovereign passed from hand to hand. The other constable had discreetly drawn off a pace or two.

"All the same, it's a rum go."

"Yes, isn't it?" Gervase assented in his heartiest tone. "Here is my card, in case you're not satisfied."

"If *you're* satisfied, Sir——"

"Quite so. Good night!" Gervase thrust both hands into his pockets again and strode off. I followed him, with a heart hotter than ever—followed him like a whipped cur, as they say. Yes, that was just it. He who had already robbed me of everything else had now kicked even the pedestal from under me as a figure of tragedy. Five minutes ago I had been the implacable avenger tracking my unconscious victim across the city. Heaven knows how small an excuse it was for self-

respect; but one who has lost character may yet chance to catch a dignity from circumstances; and to tell the truth, for all my desperate earnestness I had allowed my vanity to take some artistic satisfaction in the sinister chase. It had struck me—shall I say?—as an effective ending, nor had I failed to note that the snow lent it a romantic touch.

And behold, the unconscious victim knew all about it, and had politely interfered when a couple of unromantic "Bobbies" threatened the performance by tumbling the stalking avenger into the gutter! They had knocked my tragedy into harlequinade as easily as you might bash in a hat; and my enemy had refined the cruelty of it by coming to the rescue and ironically restarting the poor play on lines of comedy. I saw too late that I ought to have refused his help, to have assaulted the constable and been hauled to the police-station. Not an impressive wind-up, to be sure; but less humiliating than this! Even so, Gervase might have trumped the poor card by following with a gracious offer to bail me out!

As it was, I had put the whip into his hand, and must follow him like a cur. The distance he kept assured me that the similitude had not escaped him. He strode on without deigning a single glance behind, still in cold derision presenting me his broad back and silently challenging me to shoot. And I followed, hating him worse than ever, swearing that the last five minutes should not be forgotten, but charged for royally when the reckoning came to be paid.

I followed thus up Conduit Street, up Regent Street, and across the Circus. The frost had deepened and the mud in the roadway crackled under our feet. At

the Circus I began to guess, and when Gervase struck off into Great Portland Street, and thence by half a dozen turnings northward by east, I knew to what house he was leading me.

At the entrance of the side street in which it stood he halted and motioned me to come close.

"I forget," he said with a jerk of his thumb, "if you still have the entry. These people are not particular, to be sure."

"I have not," I answered, and felt my cheeks burning. He could not see this, nor could I see the lift of his eyebrows as he answered—

"Ah? I hadn't heard of it. . . . You'd better step round by the mews, then. You know the window, the one which opens into the passage leading to Pollox Street. Wait there. It may be ten minutes before I can open."

I nodded. The house was a corner one, between the street and a by-lane tenanted mostly by cabmen; and at the back of it ran the mews where they stabled their horses. Half-way down this mews a narrow alley cut across it at right angles: a passage unfrequented by traffic, known only to the stablemen, and in the daytime used only by their children, who played hop-scotch on the flagged pavement, where no one interrupted them. You wondered at its survival—from end to end it must have measured a good fifty yards—in a district where every square foot of ground fetched money; until you learned that the house had belonged, in the twenties, to a nobleman who left a name for eccentric profligacy, and who, as owner of the land, could afford to indulge his humours. The estate since his death was in no position to afford money for altera-

tions, and the present tenants of the house found the passage convenient enough.

My footsteps disturbed no one in the sleeping mews; and doubling back noiselessly through the passage, I took up my station beside the one low window which opened upon it from the blank back premises of the house. Even with the glimmer of snow to help me, I had to grope for the window-sill to make sure of my bearings. The minutes crawled by, and the only sound came from a stall where one of the horses had kicked through his thin straw bedding and was shuffling an uneasy hoof upon the cobbles. Then, just as I too had begun to shuffle my frozen feet, I heard a scratching sound, the unbolting of a shutter, and Gervase drew up the sash softly.

"Nip inside!" he whispered. "No more noise than you can help. I have sent off the night porter. He tells me the bank is still going in the front of the house—half a dozen playing, perhaps."

I hoisted myself over the sill, and dropped inside. The wall of this annexe—which had no upper floor, and invited you to mistake it for a harmless studio—was merely a sheath, so to speak. Within, a corridor divided it from the true wall of the room: and this room had no window or top-light, though a handsome one in the roof—a dummy—beguiled the eyes of its neighbours.

There was but one room: an apartment of really fine proportions, never used by the tenants of the house, and known but to a few curious ones among its frequenters.

The story went that the late owner, Earl C——, had reason to believe himself persistently cheated at

cards by his best friends, and in particular by a Duke of the Blood Royal, who could hardly be accused to his face. The Earl's sense of honour forbade him to accuse any meaner man while the big culprit went unrebuked. Therefore he continued to lose magnificently while he devised a new room for play: the room into which I now followed Gervase.

I had stood in it once before and admired the courtly and costly thoroughness of the Earl's rebuke. I had imagined him conducting his expectant guests to the door, ushering them in with a wave of the hand, and taking his seat tranquilly amid the dead, embarrassed silence: had imagined him facing the Royal Duke and asking, "Shall we cut?" with a voice of the politest inflection.

For the room was a sheet of mirrors. Mirrors panelled the walls, the doors, the very backs of the shutters. The tables had mirrors for tops: the whole ceiling was one vast mirror. From it depended three great candelabra of cut-glass, set with reflectors here, there, and everywhere.

I had heard that even the floor was originally of polished brass. If so, later owners must have ripped up the plates and sold them: for now a few cheap Oriental rugs carpeted the unpolished boards. The place was abominably dusty: the striped yellow curtains had lost half their rings and drooped askew from their soiled vallances. Across one of the wall-panels ran an ugly scar. A smell of rat pervaded the air. The present occupiers had no use for a room so obviously unsuitable to games of chance, as they understood chance: and I doubt if a servant entered it once a month. Gervase had ordered candles and a fire: but the chimney

was out of practice, and the smoke wreathed itself slowly about us as we stood surrounded by the ghostly company of our reflected selves.

"We shall not be disturbed," said Gervase. "I told the man I was expecting a friend, that our business was private, and that until he called I wished to be alone. I did not explain by what entrance I expected him. The people in the front cannot hear us. Have a cigar?" He pushed the open case towards me. Then, as I drew back, "You've no need to be scrupulous," he added, "seeing that they were bought with your money."

"If that's so, I will," said I; and having chosen one struck a match. Glancing round, I saw a hundred small flames spurt up, and a hundred men hold them to a hundred glowing cigar-tips.

"After you with the match." Gervase took it from me with a steady hand. He, too, glanced about him while he puffed. "Ugh!" He blew a long cloud, and shivered within his furred overcoat. "What a gang!"

"It takes all sorts to make a world," said I fatuously, for lack of anything better.

"Don't be an infernal idiot!" he answered, flicking the dust off one of the gilt chairs, and afterwards cleaning a space for his elbow on the looking-glass table. "It takes only two sorts to make the world we've lived in, and that's you and I." He gazed slowly round the walls. "You and I, and a few fellows like us—not to mention the women, who don't count."

"Well," said I, "as far as the world goes—if you must discuss it—I always found it a good enough place."

"Because you started as an unconsidering fool: and because, afterwards, when we came to grips, you were the under-dog, and I gave you no time. My word—how I have hustled you!"

I yawned. "All right: I can wait. Only if you suppose I came here to listen to your moral reflections——"

He pulled the cigar from between his teeth and looked at me along it.

"I know perfectly well why you came here," he said slowly, and paused. "Hadn't we better have it out —with the cards on the table?" He drew a small revolver from his pocket and laid it with a light clink on the table before him. I hesitated for a moment, then followed his example, and the silent men around us did the same.

A smile curled his thin lips as he observed this multiplied gesture. "Yes," he said, as if to himself, "that is what it all comes to."

"And now," said I, "since you know my purpose here, perhaps you will tell me yours."

"That is just what I am trying to explain. Only you are so impatient, and it—well, it's a trifle complicated." He puffed for a moment in silence. "Roughly, it might be enough to say that I saw you standing outside my house a while ago; that I needed a talk with you alone, in some private place; that I guessed, if you saw me, you would follow with no more invitation; and that, so reasoning, I led you here, where no one is likely to interrupt us."

"Well," I admitted, "all that seems plain sailing."

"Quite so; but it's at this point the thing grows complicated." He rose, and walking to the fire-place,

turned his back on me and spread his palms to the blaze. "Well," he asked, after a moment, gazing into the mirror before him, "why don't you shoot?"

I thrust my hands into my trouser-pockets and leaned back staring—I dare say sulkily enough—at the two revolvers within grasp. "I've got my code," I muttered.

"The code of—these mirrors. You won't do the thing because it's not the thing to do; because these fellows"—he waved a hand and the ghosts waved back at him—"don't do such things, and you haven't the nerve to sin off your own bat. Come"—he strolled back to his seat and leaned towards me across the table—"it's not much to boast of, but at this eleventh hour we must snatch what poor credit we can. You are, I suppose, a more decent fellow for not having fired: and I—— By the way, you did feel the temptation?"

I nodded. "You may put your money on that. I never see you without wanting to kill you. What's more, I'm going to do it."

"And I," he said, "knew the temptation and risked it. No: let's be honest about it. There was no risk: because, my good Sir, I know you to a hair."

"There was," I growled.

"Pardon me, there was none. I came here having a word to say to you, and these mirrors have taught me how to say it. Take a look at them—the world we are leaving—that's it: and a cursed second-hand, second-class one at that."

He paced slowly round on it, slewing his body in the chair.

"I say a second-class one," he resumed, "because, my dear Reggie, when all's said and done, we are

second-class, the pair of us, and pretty bad second-class. I met you first at Harrow. Our fathers had money: they wished us to be gentlemen without well understanding what it meant: and with unlimited pocket-money and his wits about him any boy can make himself a power in a big school. That is what we did: towards the end we even set the fashion for a certain set; and a rank bad fashion it was. But, in truth, we had no business there: on every point of breeding we were outsiders. I suspect it was a glimmering consciousness of this that made us hate each other from the first. We understood one another too well. Oh, there's no mistake about it! Whatever we've missed in life, you and I have hated."

He paused, eyeing me queerly. I kept my hands in my pockets. "Go on," I said.

"From Harrow we went to College—the same business over again. We drifted, of course, into the same set; for already we had become necessary to each other. We set the pace of that set—were its apparent leaders. But in truth we were alone—you and I—as utterly alone as two shipwrecked men on a raft. The others were shadows to us: we followed their code because we had to be gentlemen, but we did not understand it in the least. For, after all, the roots of that code lay in the breeding and tradition of honour, with which we had no concern. To each other you and I were intelligible and real; but as concerned that code and the men who followed it by right of birth and nature, we were looking-glass men imitating—imitating—imitating."

"We set the pace," said I. "You've allowed that."

"To be sure we did. We even modified the code

a bit—to its hurt; though as conscious outsiders we could dare very little. For instance, the talk of our associates about women—and no doubt their thoughts, too—grew sensibly baser. The sanctity of gambling debts, on the other hand, we did nothing to impair: because we had money. I recall your virtuous indignation at the amount of paper floated by poor W—— towards the end of the great baccarat term. Poor devil! He paid up—or his father did—and took his name off the books. He's in Ceylon now, I believe. At length you have earned a partial right to sympathise: or would have, if only you had paid up."

"Take care, Gervase!"

"My good Sir, don't miss my point. Wasn't I just as indignant with W——? If I'd been warned off Newmarket Heath, if I'd been shown the door of the hell we're sitting in, shouldn't I feel just as you are feeling? Try to understand!"

"You forget Elaine, I think."

"No: I do not forget Elaine. We left College: I to add money to money in my father's office; you to display your accomplishments in spending what your father had earned. That was the extent of the difference. To both of us, money and the indulgence it buys meant everything in life. All I can boast of is the longer sight. The office-hours were a nuisance, I admit: but I was clever enough to keep my hold on the old set; and then, after office-hours, I met you constantly, and studied and hated you—studied you because I hated you. Elaine came between us. You fell in love with her. That I, too, should fall in love with her was no coincidence, but the severest of logic. Given such a woman and two such men, no other course

of fate is conceivable. She made it necessary for me to put hate into practice. If she had not offered herself, why, then it would have been somebody else: that's all. Good Lord!" he rapped the table, and his voice rose for the first time above its level tone of exposition, "You don't suppose all my study—all my years of education—were to be wasted!"

He checked himself, eyed me again, and resumed in his old voice—

"You wanted money by this time. I was a solicitor —your old college friend—and you came to me. I knew you would come, as surely as I knew you would not fire that pistol just now. For years I had trained myself to look into your mind and anticipate its working. Don't I tell you that from the first you were the only real creature this world held for me? You were my only book, and I had to learn you: at first without fixed purpose, then deliberately. And when the time came I put into practice what I knew: just that and no more. My dear Reggie, you never had a chance."

"Elaine?" I muttered again.

"Elaine was the girl for you—or for me: just that again and no more."

"By George!" said I, letting out a laugh. "If I thought that!"

"What?"

"Why, that after ruining me, you have missed being happy!"

He sighed impatiently, and his eyes, though he kept them fastened on mine, seemed to be tiring. "I thought," he said, "I could time your intelligence over any fence. But to-night there's something wrong. Either I'm out of practice or your brain has been going

to the deuce. What, man! You're shying at every bank! Is it drink, hey? Or hunger?"

"It might be a little of both," I answered. "But stay a moment and let me get things straight. I stood between you and Elaine—no, give me time—between you and your aims, whatever they were. Very well. You trod over me; or, rather, you pulled me up by the roots and pitched me into outer darkness to rot. And now it seems that, after all, you are not content. In the devil's name, why?"

"Why? Oh, cannot you see? . . . Take a look at these mirrors again—our world, I tell you. See—you and I—you and I—always you and I! Man, I pitched you into darkness as you say, and then I woke and knew the truth—that you were necessary to me."

"Hey?"

"*I can't do without you!*" It broke from him in a cry. "So help me God, Reggie, it is the truth!"

I stared in his face for half a minute maybe, and broke out laughing. "Jeshurun waxed fat and—turned sentimental! A nice copy-book job you make of it, too!

Oh, send my brother back to me—
I cannot play alone!

Perhaps you'd like me to buy a broom and hire the crossing in Lennox Gardens? Then you'd be able to contemplate me all day long, and nourish your fine fat soul with delicate eating. Pah! You make me sick."

"It's the truth," said he quietly.

"It may be. To me it looks a sight more like *foie gras*. Can't do without me, can't you? Well, I can jolly well do without you, and I'm going to."

"I warn you," he said: "I have done you an injury

or two in my time, but by George if I stand up and let you shoot me—well, I hate you badly enough, but I won't let you do it without fair warning."

"I'll risk it anyway," said I.

"Very well." He stood up, and folded his arms. "Shoot, then, and be hanged!"

I put out my hand to the revolver, hesitated, and withdrew it.

"That's not the way," I said. "I've got my code, as I told you before."

"Does the code forbid suicide?" he asked.

"That's a different thing."

"Not at all. The man who commits suicide kills an unarmed man."

"But the unarmed man happens to be himself."

"Suppose that in this instance your distinction won't work? Look here," he went on, as I pushed back my chair impatiently, "I have one truth more for you. I swear I believe that what we have hated, we two, is not each other, but ourselves or our own likeness. I swear I believe we two have so shared natures in hate that no power can untwist and separate them to render each his own. But I swear also I believe that if you lift that revolver to kill, you will take aim, not at me, but by instinct at a worse enemy—yourself, vital in my heart."

"You have some pretty theories to-night," I sneered. "Perhaps you'll go on to tell me which of us two has been Elaine's husband, feeding daintily in Lennox Gardens, clothed in purple and fine linen, while the other——"

He interrupted me by picking up his revolver and striding to the fire-place again.

"So be it, since you will have it so. Kill me," he

added, with a queer look, "and perhaps you may go back to Lennox Gardens and enjoy all these things in my place."

I took my station. Both revolvers were levelled now. I took sight along mine at his detested face. It was white but curiously eager—hopeful even. I lowered my arm, scanning his face still; and still scanning it, set my weapon down on the table.

"I believe you are mad," said I slowly. "But one thing I see—that, mad or not, you're in earnest. For some reason you want me to kill you; therefore that shall wait. For some reason it is torture to you to live and do without me: well, I'll try you with that. It will do me good to hurt you a bit." I slipped the revolver into my pocket and tapped it. "Though I don't understand them, I won't quarrel with your sentiments so long as you suffer from them. When that fails, I'll find another opportunity for this. Good night." I stepped to the door.

"Reggie!"

I shut the door on his cry: crossed the corridor, and climbing out through the window, let myself drop into the lane.

As my feet touched the snow a revolver-shot rang out in the room behind me.

I caught at the frozen sill to steady myself: and crouching there, listened. Surely the report must have alarmed the house! I waited for the sound of footsteps: waited for three minutes—perhaps longer. None came. To be sure, the room stood well apart from the house: but it was incredible that the report should have awakened no one! My own ears still rang with it.

Still no footsteps came. The horse in the stable

close by was still shuffling his hoof on the cobbles, no other sound. . . .

Very stealthily I hoisted myself up on the sill again, listened, dropped inside, and tiptoed my way to the door. The candles were still burning in the Room of Mirrors. And by the light of them, as I entered, Gervase stepped to meet me.

"Ah, it's you," I stammered. "I heard—that is, I thought——"

And with that I saw—recognised with a catch of the breath—that the figure I spoke to was not Gervase, but my own reflected image, stepping forward with pale face and ghastly from a mirror. Yet a moment before I could have sworn it was Gervase.

Gervase lay stretched on the hearthrug with his hand towards the fire. I caught up a candle, and bent over him. His features were not to be recognised.

As I straightened myself up, with the candle in my hand, for an instant those features, obliterated in the flesh, gazed at me in a ring, a hundred times repeated behind a hundred candles. And again, at a second glance, I saw that the face was not Gervase's but my own.

I set down the candle and made off, closing the door behind me. The horror of it held me by the hair, but I flung it off and pelted down the lane and through the mews. Once in the street I breathed again, pulled myself together, and set off at a rapid walk, southwards, but not clearly knowing whither.

As a matter of fact, I took the line by which I had come: with the single difference that I made straight into Berkeley Square through Bruton Street. I had, I say, no clear purpose in following this line rather than another. I had none for taking Lennox Gardens on the

way to my squalid lodgings in Chelsea. I had a purpose, no doubt; but will swear it only grew definite as I came in sight of the lamp still burning beneath Gervase's portico.

There was a figure, too, under the lamp—the butler—bending there and rolling up the strip of red carpet. As he pulled its edges from the frozen snow I came on him suddenly.

"Oh, it's you, Sir!" He stood erect, and with the air of a man infinitely relieved.

"Gervase!"

The door opened wide and there stood Elaine in her ball-gown, a-glitter with diamonds.

"Gervase, dear, where have you been? We have been terribly anxious——"

She said it, looking straight down on me—on me—who stood in my tattered clothes in the full glare of the lamp. And then I heard the butler catch his breath, and suddenly her voice trailed off in wonder and pitiful disappointment.

"It's not Gervase! It's Reg—Mr. Travers. I beg your pardon. I thought——"

But I passed up the steps and stood before her: and said, as she drew back—

"There has been an accident. Gervase has shot himself." I turned to the butler. "You had better run to the police station. Stay: take this revolver. It won't count anything as evidence: but I ask you to examine it and make sure all the chambers are loaded."

A thud in the hall interrupted me. I ran in and knelt beside Elaine, and as I stooped to lift her—as my hand touched her hair—this was the jealous question on my lips—

"What has *she* to do with it. It is *I* who cannot do without him—who must miss him always!"

A PAIR OF HANDS

AN OLD MAID'S GHOST-STORY

"YES," said Miss Le Petyt, gazing into the deep fire-place and letting her hands and her knitting lie for the moment idle in her lap. "Oh, yes, I have seen a ghost. In fact I have lived in a house with one for quite a long time."

"How you *could*——!" began one of my host's daughters; and "*You,* Aunt Emily?" cried the other at the same moment.

Miss Le Petyt, gentle soul, withdrew her eyes from the fire-place and protested with a gay little smile. "Well, my dears, I am not quite the coward you take me for. And, as it happens, mine was the most harmless ghost in the world. In fact"—and here she looked at the fire again—"I was quite sorry to lose her."

"It was a woman, then? Now *I* think," said Miss Blanche, "that female ghosts are the horridest of all. They wear little shoes with high red heels, and go about *tap, tap,* wringing their hands."

"This one wrung her hands, certainly. But I don't know about the high red heels, for I never saw her feet. Perhaps she was like the Queen of Spain, and hadn't any. And as for the hands, it all depends *how* you wring them. There's an elderly shopwalker at Knightsbridge, for instance——"

"Don't be prosy, dear, when you know that we're just dying to hear the story."

Miss Le Petyt turned to me with a small deprecating laugh. "It's such a little one."

"The story, or the ghost?"

"Both."

And this was Miss Le Petyt's story:—

"It happened when I lived down in Cornwall, at Tresillack on the south coast. Tresillack was the name of the house, which stood quite alone at the head of a coombe, within sound of the sea but without sight of it; for though the coombe led down to a wide open beach, it wound and twisted half a dozen times on its way, and its overlapping sides closed the view from the house, which was advertised as 'secluded.' I was very poor in those days. Your father and all of us were poor then, as I trust, my dears, you will never be; but I was young enough to be romantic and wise enough to like independence, and this word 'secluded' took my fancy.

"The misfortune was that it had taken the fancy, or just suited the requirements, of several previous tenants. You know, I dare say, the kind of person who rents a secluded house in the country? Well, yes, there are several kinds; but they seem to agree in being odious. No one knows where they come from, though they soon remove all doubt about where they're 'going to,' as the children say. 'Shady' is the word, is it not? Well, the previous tenants of Tresillack (from first to last a bewildering series) had been shady with a vengeance.

"I knew nothing of this when I first made application to the landlord, a solid yeoman inhabiting a farm at the foot of the coombe, on a cliff overlooking

the beach. To him I presented myself fearlessly as a spinster of decent family and small but assured income, intending a rural life of combined seemliness and economy. He met my advances politely enough, but with an air of suspicion which offended me. I began by disliking him for it: afterwards I set it down as an unpleasant feature in the local character. I was doubly mistaken. Farmer Hosking was slow-witted, but as honest a man as ever stood up against hard times; and a more open and hospitable race than the people on that coast I never wish to meet. It was the caution of a child who had burnt his fingers, not once but many times. Had I known what I afterwards learned of Farmer Hosking's tribulations as landlord of a 'secluded country residence,' I should have approached him with the bashfulness proper to my suit and faltered as I undertook to prove the bright exception in a long line of painful experiences. He had bought the Tresillack estate twenty years before—on mortgage, I fancy—because the land adjoined his own and would pay him for tillage. But the house was a nuisance, an incubus: and had been so from the beginning.

"'Well, miss,' he said, 'you're welcome to look over it; a pretty enough place, inside and out. There's no trouble about keys, because I've put in a housekeeper, a widow-woman, and she'll show you round. With your leave I'll step up the coombe so far with you, and put you in your way.' As I thanked him he paused and rubbed his chin. 'There's one thing I must tell you, though. Whoever takes the house must take Mrs. Carkeek along with it."

"'Mrs. Carkeek?' I echoed dolefully. 'Is that the housekeeper?'

"'Yes: she was wife to my late hind. I'm sorry, miss,' he added, my face telling him no doubt what sort of woman I expected Mrs. Carkeek to be; 'but I had to make it a rule after—after some things that happened. And I dare say you won't find her so bad. Mary Carkeek's a sensible comfortable woman, and knows the place. She was in service there to Squire Kendall when he sold up and went: her first place it was.'

"'I may as well see the house, anyhow,' said I dejectedly. So we started to walk up the coombe. The path, which ran beside a little chattering stream, was narrow for the most part, and Farmer Hosking, with an apology, strode on ahead to beat aside the brambles. But whenever its width allowed us to walk side by side I caught him from time to time stealing a shy inquisitive glance under his rough eyebrows. Courteously though he bore himself, it was clear that he could not sum me up to his satisfaction or bring me square with his notion of a tenant for his 'secluded country residence.'

"I don't know what foolish fancy prompted it, but about half-way up the coombe I stopped short and asked:

"'There are no ghosts, I suppose?'

"It struck me, a moment after I had uttered it, as a supremely silly question; but he took it quite seriously. 'No; I never heard tell of any *ghosts*.' He laid a queer sort of stress on the word. 'There's always been trouble with servants, and maids' tongues will be runnin'. But Mary Carkeek lives up there alone, and she seems comfortable enough.'

"We walked on. By and by he pointed with his stick. 'It don't look like a place for ghosts, now, do it?'

"Certainly it did not. Above an untrimmed orchard

rose a terrace of turf scattered with thorn-bushes, and above this a terrace of stone, upon which stood the prettiest cottage I had ever seen. It was long and low and thatched; a deep verandah ran from end to end. Clematis, Banksia roses and honeysuckle climbed the posts of this verandah, and big blooms of the Maréchal Niel were clustered along its roof, beneath the lattices of the bedroom windows. The house was small enough to be called a cottage, and rare enough in features and in situation to confer distinction on any tenant. It suggested what in those days we should have called 'elegant' living. And I could have clapped my hands for joy.

"My spirits mounted still higher when Mrs. Carkeek opened the door to us. I had looked for a Mrs. Gummidge, and I found a healthy middle-aged woman with a thoughtful but contented face, and a smile which, without a trace of obsequiousness, quite bore out the farmer's description of her. She was a comfortable woman; and while we walked through the rooms together (for Mr. Hosking waited outside) I 'took to' Mrs. Carkeek. Her speech was direct and practical; the rooms, in spite of their faded furniture, were bright and exquisitely clean; and somehow the very atmosphere of the house gave me a sense of well-being, of feeling at home and cared for; yes, *of being loved*. Don't laugh, my dears; for when I've done you may not think this fancy altogether foolish.

"I stepped out into the verandah, and Farmer Hosking pocketed the pruning-knife which he had been using on a bush of jasmine.

"'This is better than anything I had dreamed of,' said I.

"'Well, miss, that's not a wise way of beginning a bargain, if you'll excuse me.'

"He took no advantage, however, of my admission; and we struck the bargain as we returned down the coombe to his farm, where the hired chaise waited to convey me back to the market-town. I had meant to engage a maid of my own, but now it occurred to me that I might do very well with Mrs. Carkeek. This, too, was settled in the course of the next day or two, and within the week I had moved into my new home.

"I can hardly describe to you the happiness of my first month at Tresillack; because (as I now believe) if I take the reasons which I had for being happy, one by one, there remains over something which I cannot account for. I was moderately young, entirely healthy; I felt myself independent and adventurous; the season was high summer, the weather glorious, the garden in all the pomp of June, yet sufficiently unkempt to keep me busy, give me a sharp appetite for meals, and send me to bed in that drowsy stupor which comes of the odours of earth. I spent the most of my time out-of-doors, winding up the day's work as a rule with a walk down the cool valley, along the beach and back.

"I soon found that all housework could be safely left to Mrs. Carkeek. She did not talk much; indeed her only fault (a rare one in housekeepers) was that she talked too little, and even when I addressed her seemed at times unable to give me her attention. It was as though her mind strayed off to some small job she had forgotten, and her eyes wore a listening look, as though she waited for the neglected task to speak and remind her. But as a matter of fact she forgot

nothing. Indeed, my dears, I was never so well attended to in my life.

"Well, that is what I'm coming to. That, so to say, is just *it*. The woman not only had the rooms swept and dusted, and my meals prepared to the moment. In a hundred odd little ways this orderliness, these preparations, seemed to read my desires. Did I wish the roses renewed in a bowl upon the dining-table, sure enough at the next meal they would be replaced by fresh ones. Mrs. Carkeek (I told myself) must have surprised and interpreted a glance of mine. And yet I could not remember having glanced at the bowl in her presence. And how on earth had she guessed the very roses, the very shapes and colours I had lightly wished for? This is only an instance, you understand. Every day, and from morning to night, I happened on others, each slight enough, but all together bearing witness to a ministering intelligence as subtle as it was untiring.

"I am a light sleeper, as you know, with an uncomfortable knack of waking with the sun and roaming early. No matter how early I rose at Tresillack, Mrs. Carkeek seemed to have prevented me. Finally I had to conclude that she arose and dusted and tidied as soon as she judged me safely a-bed. For once, finding the drawing-room (where I had been sitting late) 'redded up' at four in the morning, and no trace of a plate of raspberries which I had carried thither after dinner and left overnight, I determined to test her, and walked through to the kitchen, calling her by name. I found the kitchen as clean as a pin, and the fire laid, but no trace of Mrs. Carkeek. I walked upstairs and knocked at her door. At the second

knock a sleepy voice cried out, and presently the good woman stood before me in her nightgown, looking (I thought) very badly scared.

"'No,' I said, 'it's not a burglar. But I've found out what I wanted, that you do your morning's work over-night. But you mustn't wait for me when I choose to sit up. And now go back to your bed like a good soul, whilst I take a run down to the beach.'

"She stood blinking in the dawn. Her face was still white.

"'Oh, miss,' she gasped, 'I made sure you must have seen something!'

"'And so I have,' I answered, 'but it was neither burglars nor ghosts.'

"'Thank God!' I heard her say as she turned her back to me in her grey bedroom—which faced the north. And I took this for a carelessly pious expression and ran downstairs, thinking no more of it.

"A few days later I began to understand.

"The plan of Tresillack house (I must explain) was simplicity itself. To the left of the hall as you entered was the dining-room; to the right the drawing-room, with a boudoir beyond. The foot of the stairs faced the front door, and beside it, passing a glazed inner door, you found two others right and left, the left opening on the kitchen, the right on a passage which ran by a store-cupboard under the bend of the stairs to a neat pantry with the usual shelves and linen-press, and under the window (which faced north) a porcelain basin and brass tap. On the first morning of my tenancy I had visited this pantry and turned the tap; but no water ran. I supposed this to be accidental. Mrs. Carkeek had to wash up glassware and crockery,

and no doubt Mrs. Carkeek would complain of any failure in the water-supply.

"But the day after my surprise visit (as I called it) I had picked a basketful of roses, and carried them into the pantry as a handy place to arrange them in. I chose a china bowl and went to fill it at the tap. Again the water would not run.

"I called Mrs. Carkeek. 'What is wrong with this tap?' I asked. 'The rest of the house is well enough supplied.'

"'I don't know, miss. I never use it.'

"'But there must be a reason; and you must find it a great nuisance washing up the plate and glasses in the kitchen. Come around to the back with me, and we'll have a look at the cisterns.'

"'The cisterns 'll be all right, miss. I assure you I don't find it a trouble.'

"But I was not to be put off. The back of the house stood but ten feet from a wall which was really but a stone face built against the cliff cut away by the architect. Above the cliff rose the kitchen-garden, and from its lower path we looked over the wall's parapet upon the cisterns. There were two—a very large one, supplying the kitchen and the bathroom above the kitchen; and a small one, obviously fed by the other, and as obviously leading, by a pipe which I could trace, to the pantry. Now the big cistern stood almost full, and yet the small one, though on a lower level, was empty.

"'It's as plain as daylight,' said I. 'The pipe between the two is choked.' And I clambered on to the parapet.

"'I wouldn't, miss. The pantry tap is only cold water, and no use to me. From the kitchen boiler I gets it hot, you see.'

"'But I want the pantry water for my flowers.' I bent over and groped. 'I thought as much!' said I, as I wrenched out a thick plug of cork and immediately the water began to flow. I turned triumphantly on Mrs. Carkeek, who had grown suddenly red in the face. Her eyes were fixed on the cork in my hand. To keep it more firmly wedged in its place somebody had wrapped it round with a rag of calico print; and, discoloured though the rag was, I seemed to recall the pattern (a lilac sprig). Then, as our eyes met, it occurred to me that only two mornings before Mrs. Carkeek had worn a print gown of that same sprigged pattern.

"I had the presence of mind to hide this very small discovery, sliding over it with some quite trivial remark; and presently Mrs. Carkeek regained her composure. But I own I felt disappointed in her. It seemed such a paltry thing to be disingenuous over. She had deliberately acted a fib before me; and why? Merely because she preferred the kitchen to the pantry tap. It was childish. 'But servants are all the same,' I told myself. 'I must take Mrs. Carkeek as she is; and, after all, she is a treasure.'

"On the second night after this, and between eleven and twelve o'clock, I was lying in bed and reading myself sleepy over a novel of Lord Lytton's, when a small sound disturbed me. I listened. The sound was clearly that of water trickling; and I set it down to rain. A shower (I told myself) had filled the water-pipes which drained the roof. Somehow I could not fix the sound. There was a water-pipe against the wall just outside my window. I rose and drew up the blind.

"To my astonishment no rain was falling; no rain

had fallen. I felt the slate window-sill; some dew had gathered there—no more. There was no wind, no cloud: only a still moon high over the eastern slope of the coombe, the distant plash of waves, and the fragrance of many roses. I went back to bed and listened again. Yes, the trickling sound continued, quite distinct in the silence of the house, not to be confused for a moment with the dull murmur of the beach. After a while it began to grate on my nerves. I caught up my candle, flung my dressing-gown about me, and stole softly downstairs.

"Then it was simple. I traced the sound to the pantry. 'Mrs. Carkeek has left the tap running,' said I: and, sure enough, I found it so—a thin trickle steadily running to waste in the porcelain basin. I turned off the tap, went contentedly back to my bed, and slept.

"—— for some hours. I opened my eyes in darkness, and at once knew what had awakened me. The tap was running again. Now it had shut easily in my hand, but not so easily that I could believe it had slipped open again of its own accord. 'This is Mrs. Carkeek's doing,' said I; and am afraid I added 'Bother Mrs. Carkeek!'

"Well, there was no help for it: so I struck a light, looked at my watch, saw that the hour was just three o'clock, and descended the stairs again. At the pantry door I paused. I was not afraid — not one little bit. In fact the notion that anything might be wrong had never crossed my mind. But I remember thinking, with my hand on the door, that if Mrs. Carkeek were in the pantry I might happen to give her a severe fright.

"I pushed the door open briskly. Mrs. Carkeek

was not there. But something *was* there, by the porcelain basin—something which might have sent me scurrying upstairs two steps at a time, but which as a matter of fact held me to the spot. My heart seemed to stand still—so still! And in the stillness I remember setting down the brass candlestick on a tall nest of drawers beside me.

"Over the porcelain basin and beneath the water trickling from the tap I saw two hands.

"That was all—two small hands, a child's hands. I cannot tell you how they ended.

"No: they were not cut off. I saw them quite distinctly: just a pair of small hands and the wrists, and after that—nothing. They were moving briskly —washing themselves clean. I saw the water trickle and splash over them—not *through* them—but just as it would on real hands. They were the hands of a little girl, too. Oh, yes, I was sure of that at once. Boys and girls wash their hands differently. I can't just tell you what the difference is, but it's unmistakable.

"I saw all this before my candle slipped and fell with a crash. I had set it down without looking—for my eyes were fixed on the basin—and had balanced it on the edge of the nest of drawers. After the crash, in the darkness there, with the water running, I suffered some bad moments. Oddly enough, the thought uppermost with me was that I *must* shut off that tap before escaping. I *had* to. And after a while I picked up all my courage, so to say, between my teeth, and with a little sob thrust out my hand and did it. Then I fled.

"The dawn was close upon me: and as soon as the sky reddened I took my bath, dressed and went down-

stairs. And there at the pantry door I found Mrs. Carkeek, also dressed, with my candlestick in her hand.

"'Ah!' said I, 'you picked it up.'

"Our eyes met. Clearly Mrs. Carkeek wished me to begin, and I determined at once to have it out with her.

"'And you knew all about it. That's what accounts for your plugging up the cistern.'

"'You saw . . .?" she began.

"'Yes, yes. And you must tell me all about it—never mind how bad. Is——is it—murder?'

"'Law bless you, miss, whatever put such horrors in your head?'

"'She was washing her hands.'

"'Ah, so she does, poor dear! But—murder! And dear little Miss Margaret, that wouldn't go to hurt a fly!'

"'Miss Margaret?'

"'Eh, she died at seven year. Squire Kendall's only daughter; and that's over twenty year ago. I was her nurse, miss, and I know—diphtheria it was; she took it down in the village.'

"'But how do you know it is Margaret?'

"'Those hands—why, how could I mistake, that used to be her nurse?'

"'But why does she wash them?'

"'Well, miss, being always a dainty child—and the house-work, you see——'

"I took a long breath. 'Do you mean to tell me that all this tidying and dusting——' I broke off. 'Is it *she* who has been taking this care of me?'

"Mrs. Carkeek met my look steadily.

"'Who else, miss?'

"'Poor little soul!'

"'Well now'—Mrs. Carkeek rubbed my candlestick with the edge of her apron—'I'm so glad you take it like this. For there isn't really nothing to be afraid of—is there?' She eyed me wistfully. 'It's my belief she loves you, miss. But only to think what a time she must have had with the others!'

"'The others?' I echoed.

"'The other tenants, miss: the ones afore you.'

"'Were they bad?'

"'They was awful. Didn't Farmer Hosking tell you? They carried on fearful—one after another, and each one worse than the last."

"'What was the matter with them? Drink?'

"'Drink, miss, with some of 'em. There was the Major—he used to go mad with it, and run about the coombe in his nightshirt. Oh, scandalous! And his wife drank too—that is, if she ever *was* his wife. Just think of that tender child washing up after their nasty doings!'

"I shivered.

"'But that wasn't the worst, miss—not by a long way. There was a pair here—from the colonies, or so they gave out—with two children, a boy and gel, the eldest scarce six. Poor mites!'

"'Why, what happened?'

"'They beat those children, miss—your blood would boil!—*and* starved, *and* tortured 'em, it's my belief. You could hear their screams, I've been told, away back in the high road, and that's the best part of half a mile. Sometimes they was locked up without food for days together. But it's my belief that little Miss Margaret managed to feed them somehow. Oh, I can see her, creeping to the door and comforting!'

"'But perhaps she never showed herself when these awful people were here, but took to flight until they left.'

"'You didn't never know her, miss. The brave she was! She'd have stood up to lions. She've been here all the while: and only to think what her innocent eyes and ears must have took in! There was another couple——' Mrs. Carkeek sunk her voice.

"'Oh, hush!' said I, 'if I'm to have any peace of mind in this house!'

"'But you won't go, miss? She loves you, I know she do. And think what you might be leaving her to —what sort of tenant might come next. For she can't go. She've been here ever since her father sold the place. He died soon after. You mustn't go!'

"Now I had resolved to go, but all of a sudden I felt how mean this resolution was.

"'After all,' said I, 'there's nothing to be afraid of.'

"'That's it, miss; nothing at all. I don't even believe it's so very uncommon. Why, I've heard my mother tell of farmhouses where the rooms were swept every night as regular as clockwork, and the floors sanded, and the pots and pans scoured, and all while the maids slept. They put it down to the piskies; but we know better, miss, and now we've got the secret between us we can lie easy in our beds, and if we hear anything, say "God bless the child!" and go to sleep.'

"'Mrs. Carkeek,' said I, 'there's only one condition I have to make.'

"'What's that?'

"'Why, that you let me kiss you.'

"'Oh, you dear!' said Mrs. Carkeek as we embraced: and this was as close to familiarity as she allowed herself to go in the whole course of my acquaintance with her.

"I spent three years at Tresillack, and all that while Mrs. Carkeek lived with me and shared the secret. Few women, I dare to say, were ever so completely wrapped around with love as we were during those three years. It ran through my waking life like a song: it smoothed my pillow, touched and made my table comely, in summer lifted the heads of the flowers as I passed, and in winter watched the fire with me and kept it bright.

"'Why did I ever leave Tresillack?' Because one day, at the end of five years, Farmer Hosking brought me word that he had sold the house—or was about to sell it; I forget which. There was no avoiding it, at any rate; the purchaser being a Colonel Kendall, a brother of the old Squire.'

"'A married man?' I asked.

"'Yes, miss; with a family of eight. As pretty children as ever you see, and the mother a good lady. It's the old home to Colonel Kendall.'

"'I see. And that is why you feel bound to sell.'

"'It's a good price, too, that he offers. You mustn't think but I'm sorry enough——'

"'To turn me out? I thank you, Mr. Hosking; but you are doing the right thing.'

"Since Mrs. Carkeek was to stay, the arrangement lacked nothing of absolute perfection—except, perhaps, that it found no room for me.

"'*She*—Margaret—will be happy,' I said; 'with her cousins, you know.'

"'Oh yes, miss, she will be happy, sure enough,' Mrs. Carkeek agreed.

"So when the time came I packed up my boxes, and tried to be cheerful. But on the last morning, when

they stood corded in the hall, I sent Mrs. Carkeek upstairs upon some poor excuse, and stepped alone into the pantry.

"'Margaret!' I whispered.

"There was no answer at all. I had scarcely dared to hope for one. Yet I tried again, and, shutting my eyes this time, stretched out both hands and whispered:

"'Margaret!'

"And I will swear to my dying day that two little hands stole and rested—for a moment only—in mine."

THE LADY OF THE SHIP

[*Or so much as is told of her by Paschal Tonkin, steward and major-domo to the lamented John Milliton, of Pengersick Castle, in Cornwall: of her coming in the Portugal Ship, anno* 1526*; her marriage with the said Milliton and alleged sorceries; with particulars of the Barbary men wrecked in Mount's Bay and their entertainment in the town of Market Jew.*]

My purpose is to clear the memory of my late and dear Master; and to this end I shall tell the truth and the truth only, so far as I know it, admitting his faults; which, since he has taken them before God, no man should now aggravate by guess-work. That he had traffic with secret arts is certain; but I believe with no purpose but to fight the Devil with his own armoury. He never was a robber as Mr. Thomas St. Aubyn and Mr. William Godolphin accused him; nor, as the vulgar pretended, a lustful and bloody man. What he did was done in effort to save a woman's soul; as Jude tells us, "*Of some have compassion, that are in doubt; and others save, having mercy with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*"—though this, alas! my dear Master could not. And so with Jude I would end, praying for all of us and ascribing praise *to the only wise God, our Saviour, who is able to guard us from stumbling and set us faultless before His presence with exceeding joy.*

It was in January, 1526, after a tempest lasting three days, that the ship called the *Saint Andrew*, belonging to the King of Portugal, drove ashore in Gunwallo Cove, a little to the southward of Pengersick. She was bound from Flanders to Lisbon with a freight extraordinary rich—as I know after a fashion by my own eyesight, as well as from the inventory drawn up by Master Francis Porson, an Englishman, travelling on board of her as the King of Portugal's factor. I have a copy of it by me as I write, and here are some of Master Porson's items:

8,000 cakes of copper, valued by him at	£3,224.
18 blocks of silver, „ „	£2,250.
Silver vessels, plate, patens, ewers and pots, beside pearls, precious stones, and jewels of gold.	
Also a chest of coined money, in amount	£6,240.

There was also cloth of arras, tapestry, rich hangings, satins, velvets, silks, camlets, says, satins of Bruges, with great number of bales of Flemish and English cloth; 2,100 barber's basins; 3,200 laten candlesticks; a great chest of shalmers and other instruments of music; four sets of armour for the King of Portugal, much harness for his horses, and much beside—the whole amounting at the least computation to £16,000 [1] in value. And this I can believe on confirmation of what I myself saw upon the beach.

But let me have done with Master Porson and his tale, which runs that the *Saint Andrew*, having struck at the mouth of the cove, there utterly perished; yet, by the grace and mercy of Almighty God, the greater

[1] About £150,000 in present money.

part of the crew got safely to land, and by help of many poor folk dwelling in the neighbourhood saved all that was most valuable of the cargo. But shortly after (says he) there came on the scene three gentlemen, Thomas Saint Aubyn, William Godolphin, and John Milliton, with about sixty men armed in manner of war with bows and swords, and made an assault on the shipwrecked sailors and put them in great fear and jeopardy; and in the end took from them all they had saved from the wreck, amounting to £10,000 of treasure —"which," says he, "they will not yield up, nor make restitution, though they have been called upon to do so."

So much then for the factor's account, which I doubt not he believed to be true enough; albeit on his own confession he had lain hurt and unconscious upon the beach at the time, and his tale rested therefore on what he could learn by hearsay after his recovery; when—the matter being so important—he was at trouble to journey all the way to London and lay his complaint before the Portuguese ambassador. Moreover he made so fair a case of it that the ambassador obtained of the English Court a Commissioner, Sir Nicholas Fleming, to travel down and push inquiries on the spot—where Master Porson did not scruple to repeat his accusation, and to our faces (having indeed followed the Commissioner down for that purpose). I must say I thought him a very honest man—not to say a brave one, seeing what words he dared to use to Mr. Saint Aubyn in his own house at Clowance, calling him a mere robber. I was there when he said it and made me go hot and cold, knowing (if he did not) that for two pins Mr. Saint Aubyn might have had him drowned

like a puppy. However, he chose to make nothing of an insult from a factor. "*Mercator tantum*," replied he, snapping his fingers, and to my great joy; for any violence might have spoiled the story agreed on between us—that is, between Mr. Saint Aubyn, Mr. Godolphin, and me who acted as deputy for my Master.

This story of ours, albeit less honest, had more colour of the truth than Master Porson's hearsay. It ran that Mr. Saint Aubyn, happening near Gunwallo, heard of the wreck and rode to it, where presently Mr. Godolphin and my Master joined him and helped to save the men; that, in attempting to save the cargo also, a man of Mr. Saint Aubyn's—one Will Carnarthur—was drowned; that, in fact, very little was rescued; and, seeing the men destitute and without money to buy meat and drink, we bought the goods in lawful bargain with the master. As for the assault, we denied it, or that we took goods to anything of the value of ten thousand pounds from the sailors. All that was certainly known to be saved amounted to about £20 worth; and, in spite of many trials to recover more, which failed to pay the charges of labour, the bulk of the cargo remained in the ship and was broken up by the seas.

This was our tale, false in parts, yet a truer one than either of us, who uttered it, believed. The only person in the plot (so to say) who knew it to be true in substance was my Master. I, his deputy, took this version from him to Clowance with a mind glad enough to be relieved by my duty from having any opinion on the matter. On the one hand, I had the evidence of my senses that the booty had been saved, and too much wit to doubt that any other man would conclude it to be in my Master's possession. On the other, I had never

known him lie or deceive, or engage me to further any deceit; his word was his bond, and by practice my word was his bond also. Further, of this affair I had already begun to wonder if a man's plain senses could be trusted, as you will hear reason by and by. As for Mr. Saint Aubyn and Mr. Godolphin, they had no doubt at all that my Master was lying, and that I had come wittingly to further his lie. They would have drawn on him (I make no doubt) had he brought the tale in person. From me, his intermediate, they took it as the best to suit with the known truth and present to the Commissioner. All Cornishmen are cousins, you may say. It comes to this, rather: these gentlemen chose to accept my master's lie, and settle with him afterwards, rather than make a clean breast and be forced to wring their small shares out of the Exchequer. A neighbour can be persuaded, terrified, forced; but London is always a long way off, and London lawyers are the devil. I say freely that (knowing no more than they did, or I) these two gentlemen followed a reasonable policy.

But, after we had fitted Sir Nicholas with our common story, and as I was mounting my horse in Clowance courtyard, Mr. Saint Aubyn came close to my stirrup and said this by way of parting:

"You will understand, Mr. Tonkin, that to-day's tale is for to-day. But by God I will come and take my share—you may tell your master—and a trifle over! And the next time I overtake you I promise to put a bullet in the back of your scrag neck."

For answer to this—seeing that Master Porson stood at an easy distance with his eye on us—I saluted him gravely and rode out of the courtyard.

Now the manner of the wreck was this, and our concern with it. So nearly as I can learn, the *Saint Andrew* came ashore at two hours after noon: the date, the 20th of January, 1526, and the weather at the time coarse and foggy with a gale yet blowing from the south-west or a good west of south, but sensibly abating, and the tide wanting an hour before low water.

It happened that Mr. Saint Aubyn was riding, with twenty men at his back, homeward from Gweek, where he had spent three days on some private business, when he heard news of the wreck at a farmhouse on the road to Helleston: and so turning aside, he, whose dwelling lay farthest from it, came first to the cove. The news reached us at Pengersick a little after three o'clock; as I remember because my Master was just then settled to dinner. But he rose at once and gave word to saddle in haste, at the same time bidding me make ready to ride with him, and fifteen others.

So we set forth and rode—the wind lulling, but the rain coming down steadily—and reached Gunwallo Cove with a little daylight to spare. On the beach there we found most of the foreigners landed, but seven of them laid out starkly, who had been drowned or brought ashore dead (for the yard had fallen on board, the day before, and no time left in the ship's extremity to bury them): and three as good as dead—among whom was Master Porson, with a great wound of the scalp; also everywhere great piles of freight, chests, bales, and casks—a few staved and taking damage from salt water and rain, but the most in apparent good condition. The crew had worked very busily at the salving, and to the great credit of men who had come through suffering and peril of death.

Mr. Saint Aubyn's band, too, had lent help, though by this time the flowing of the tide forced them to give over. But the master (as one might say) of their endeavours was neither the Portuguese captain nor Mr. Saint Aubyn, but a young damsel whom I must describe more particularly.

She was standing, as we rode down the beach, nigh to the water's edge; with a group of men about her, and Mr. Saint Aubyn himself listening to her orders. I can see her now as she turned at our approaching and she and my Master looked for the first time into each other's eyes, which afterwards were to look so often and fondly. In age she appeared eighteen or twenty; her shape a mere girl's, but her face somewhat older, being pinched and peaked by the cold, yet the loveliest I have ever seen or shall see. Her hair, which seemed of a copper red, darkened by rain, was blown about her shoulders, and her drenched blue gown, hitched at the waist with a snakeskin girdle, flapped about her as she turned to one or the other, using more play of hands than our home-bred ladies do. Her feet were bare and rosy; ruddied, doubtless, by the wind and brine, but I think partly also by the angry light of the sunsetting which broke the weather to seaward and turned the pools and the wetted sand to the colour of blood. A hound kept beside her, shivering and now and then lowering his muzzle to sniff the oreweed, as if the brine of it puzzled him: a beast in shape somewhat like our greyhounds, but longer and taller, and coated like a wolf.

As I have tried to describe her she stood amid the men and the tangle of the beach; a shape majestical and yet (as we drew closer) slight and forlorn. The

present cause of her gestures we made out to be a dark-skinned fellow whom two of Saint Aubyn's men held prisoner with his arms trussed behind him. On her other hand were gathered the rest of the Portuguese, very sullen and with dark looks whenever she turned from them to Saint Aubyn and from their language to the English. He, I could see, was perplexed, and stood fingering his beard: but his face brightened as he came a step to meet my Master.

"Ha!" said he, "you can help us, Milliton. You speak the Portuguese, I believe?" (For my master was known to speak most of the languages of Europe, having caught them up in his youth when his father's madness forced him abroad. And I myself, who had accompanied him so far as Venice, could pick my way in the *lingua Franca*.) "This fellow"—pointing at the prisoner—"has just drawn a knife on the lady here; and indeed would have killed her, but for this hound of hers. My fellows have him tight and safe, as you see: but I was thinking by your leave to lodge him with you, yours being the nearest house for the safe-keeping of such. But the plague is," says he, "there seems to be more in the business than I can fathom: for one half of these drenched villains take the man's part, while scarce one of them seems too well disposed towards the lady: although to my knowledge she has worked more than any ten of them in salving the cargo. And Heaven help me if I can understand a word of their chatter!"

My Master lifted his cap to her; and she lifted her eyes to him, but never a word did she utter, though but a moment since she had been using excellent English. Only she stood, slight and helpless and (I swear) most pitiful, as one saying, "Here is my judge. I am content."

My Master turned to the prisoner and questioned him in the Portuguese. But the fellow (a man taller than the rest and passably straight-looking) would confess nothing but that his name was Gil Perez of Lagos, the boatswain of the wrecked ship. Questioned of the assault, he shook his head merely and shrugged his shoulders. His face was white: it seemed to me unaccountably, until glancing down I took note of a torn wound above his right knee on the inside, where the hound's teeth had fastened.

"But who is the captain of the ship?" my Master demanded in Portuguese; and they thrust forward a small man who seemed not over-willing. Indeed his face had nothing to commend him, being sharp and yellow, with small eyes set too near against the nose.

"Your name?" my Master demanded of him too.

"Affonzo Cabral," he answered, and plunged into a long tale of the loss of his ship and how it happened. Cut short in this and asked concerning the lady, he shrugged his shoulders and replied with an oath he knew nothing about her beyond this, that she had taken passage with him at Dunquerque for Lisbon, paying him beforehand and bearing him a letter from the Bishop of Cambrai, which conveyed to him that she was bound on some secret mission of politics to the Court of Lisbon.

As I thought, two or three of the men would have murmured something here, but for a look from her, who, turning to my Master, said quietly in good English:

"That man is a villain. My name is Alicia of Bohemia, and my mission not to be told here in public. But he best knows why he took me for passenger, and

how he has behaved towards me. Yourselves may see how I have saved his freight. And for the rest, sir" —here she bent her eyes on my Master very frankly— "I have proved these men, and claim to be delivered from them."

At this my Master knit his brows: and albeit he was a young man (scarce past thirty) and a handsome, the deep wedge-mark showed between them as I had often seen it show over the nose of the old man his father.

"I think," said he to Mr. Saint Aubyn, "this should be inquired into at greater leisure. With your leave my men shall take the prisoner to Pengersick and have him there in safe-keeping. And if"—with a bow— "the Lady Alicia will accept my poor shelter, it will be the handier for our examining of him. For the rest, cannot we be of service in rescuing yet more of the cargo?"

But this for the while was out of question: the *Saint Andrew* lying well out upon the strand, with never fewer than four or five ugly breakers between her and shore; and so balanced that every sea worked her to and fro. Moreover, her mizzen mast yet stood, as by a miracle, and the weight of it so strained at her seams that (thought I) there could be very little left of her by the next ebb.

By now, too, the night was closing down, and we must determine what to do with the cargo saved. Mr. Godolphin, who had arrived with his men during my Master's colloquy, was ready with an offer of wains and pack-horses to convey the bulk of it to the out-houses at Godolphin. But this, when I interpreted it, the Portuguese captain would not hear. Nor was he more tractable to Mr. Saint Aubyn's offer to set a

mixed guard of our three companies upon the stuff until daybreak. He plainly had his doubts of such protection: and I could not avoid some respect for his wisdom, while showing it by argument to be mere perversity. To my Master's persuasions and mine he shook his head: asking for the present to be allowed a little fuel and refreshment for his men, who would camp on the beach among their goods. And to this, in the end, we had to consent. Several times before agreeing—and perhaps more often than need was—my Master consulted with the Lady Alicia. But she seemed indifferent what happened to the ship. Indeed, she might well have been overwearied.

At length, the Portugals having it their own way, we parted: Mr. Saint Aubyn riding off to lodge for the night with Mr. Godolphin, who took charge of the three wounded men; while we carried the Lady Alicia off to Pengersick (whither the prisoner Gil Perez had been marched on ahead), she riding pillion behind my Master, and the rest of us at a seemly distance.

On reaching home I had first to busy myself with orders for the victuals to be sent down to the foreigners at the Cove, and afterwards in snatching my supper in the great hall, where already I saw my Master and the strange lady making good cheer together at the high table. He had bidden the housekeeper fetch out some robes that had been his mother's, and in these antique fittings the lady looked not awkwardly (as you might suppose), but rather like some player in a masque. I know not how 'twas: but whereas (saving my respect) I had always been to my dear Master as a brother, close to his heart and thoughts, her coming did at once remove him to a distance from me, so that I looked on

the pair as if the dais were part of some other world than this, and they, pledging each other up there and murmuring in foreign tongues and playing with glances, as two creatures moving through a play or pisky tale without care or burden of living, and yet in the end to be pitied.

My fast broken, I bethought me of our prisoner; and catching up some meats and a flask of wine, hurried to the strong room where he lay. But I found him stretched on his pallet, and turning in a kind of fever: so returned and fetched a cooling draught in place of the victuals, and without questioning made him drink it. He thanked me amid some rambling, light-headed talk—the most of it too quickly poured out for me to catch; but by and by grew easier and drowsy. I left him to sleep, putting off questions for the morning.

But early on the morrow—between five and six o'clock—came Will Hendra, a cowkeeper, into our courtyard with a strange tale; one that disquieted if it did not altogether astonish me. The tale—as told before my Master, whom I aroused to hear it—ran thus: that between midnight and one in the morning the Portugals in the Cove had been set upon and beaten from the spoils by a number of men with pikes (no doubt belonging to Saint Aubyn or Godolphin, or both), and forced to flee to the cliffs. But (here came in the wonder) the assailants, having mastered the field, fell on the casks, chests, and packages, only to find them utterly empty or filled with weed and gravel! Of freight—so Will Hendra had it from one of Godolphin's own men, who were now searching the cliffs and caverns —not twelve-pennyworth remained on the beach. The Portugals must have hidden or made away with it all.

He added that their captain had been found at the foot of the cliffs with his head battered in; but whether by a fall or a blow taken in the affray, there was no telling.

My Master let saddle at once and rode away for the Cove without breaking his fast. And I went about my customary duties until full daybreak, when I paid a visit to the strong room, to see how the prisoner had slept.

I found him sitting up in bed and nursing his leg, the wound of which appeared red and angry at the edges. I sent, therefore, for a fomentation, and while applying it thought no harm to tell him the report from the Cove. To my astonishment it threw him into a transport, though whether of rage or horror I could not at first tell. But he jerked his leg from my grasp, and beating the straw with both fists he cried out:

"I knew it! I knew it would be so! She is a witch —a daughter of Satan, or his leman! It is her doing, I tell you. It is she who has killed that fool Affonzo. She is a witch!" He fell back on the straw, his strength spent, but still beat weakly with his fists, gasping "Witch—witch!"

"Hush!" said I. "You are light-headed with your hurt. Lie quiet and let me tend it."

"As for my hurt," he answered, "your tending it will do no good. The poison of that hound of hell is in me, and nothing for me but to say my prayers. But listen you"—here he sat up again and plucked me by the shoulder as I bent over his leg. "The freight is not gone, and good reason for why: it was never landed!"

"Hey?" said I, incredulous.

"It was never landed. The men toiled as she ordered —Lord, how they toiled! Without witchcraft they had never done the half of it. I tell you they handled moonshine—wove sand. The riches they brought ashore were emptiness; vain shows that already have turned to chips and straw and rubbish. Nay, sir"—for I drew back before these ravings—"listen for the love of God, before the poison gets hold of me! Soon it will be too late. . . . The evening before we sailed from Dunquerque, we were anchored out in the tide. It was my watch. I was leaning on the rail of the poop when I caught sight of her first. She was running for her life across the dunes—running for the water-side—she and her hound beside her. Away behind her, like ants dotted over the rises of the sand, were little figures running and pursuing. Down by the waterside one boat was waiting, with a man in it—or the Devil belike—leaning on his oars. She whistled; he pulled close in shore. She leapt into the boat with the dog at her heels, and was half-way across towards our ship before the first of those after her reached the water's edge. When she hailed us I ran and fetched Affonzo the master. The rest I charge to his folly. It was he who handed her up the ship's side. How the dog came on board I know not: only that I leaned over the bulwarks to have a look at him, but heard a pattering noise, and there he was on deck behind me and close beside his mistress. The boat and rower had vanished—under the ship's stern, as I supposed; but now I have my doubts. I saw no more of them, anyhow.

"By this time Affonzo was reading her letter. The crowd by the water's edge had found a boat at length

—how, I know not; but it was a very little one, holding but six men besides the one rower, and then over-laden. They pulled towards us and hailed us just as the lady took the master's promise and went down to seek her cabin: and one of the men stood up, a tall gentleman with a chain about his neck. Affonzo went to the side to parley with him.

"The tall man with the chain cried out that he was mayor or provost—I forget which—and the woman must be given up as a proved witch who had laid the wickedest spells upon many citizens of Dunquerque. All this he had to shout; for Affonzo, who—either ignorantly or by choice—was already on Satan's side, would not suffer him to come aboard or even nigh the ship's ladder. Moreover, he drove below so many of our crew as had gathered to the side to listen, commanding me with curses to see to this. Yet I heard something of the mayor's accusation; which was that the woman had come to Dunquerque, travelling as a great lady with a retinue of servants and letters of commendation to the religious houses, on which and on many private persons of note she had bestowed relics of our Lord and the saints, pretending it was for a penance that she journeyed and gave the bounties: but that, at a certain hour, these relics had turned into toads, adders, and all manner of abominable offal, defiling the holy places and private shrines, aye, in certain churches even the very altars of God: that upon the outcry her retinue had vanished, and she herself taken to flight as we saw her running.

"At all this Affonzo scoffed, threatening to sink the boat if further troubled with their importunities. And, the provost using threats in return, he gave order to

let weigh incontinently and clear with the tide, which by this was turned to ebb. And so, amid curses which we answered by display of our guns, we stood out from that port. Of the master's purpose I make no guess. Either he was bewitched, or the woman had taken him with her beauty, and he dreamed of finding favour with her.

"This only I know, that on the second morning, she standing on deck beside him, he offered some familiar approach; whereupon the dog flew at him, and I believe would have killed him, but was in time called off by her. Within an hour we met with the weather which after three days drove us ashore. Now whether Affonzo suspected her true nature or not—as I know he had taken a great fear of her—I never had time to discover. But I know her for a witch, and for a witch I tried to make away with her. For the rest, may God pardon me!"

All this the man uttered not as I have written it, but with many gasping interruptions; and afterwards lay back as one dead. Before I could make head or tail of my wonder, I heard cries and a clatter from the courtyard, and ran out to see what was amiss.

In the courtyard I found my Master with a dozen men closing the bolts of the great gate against a company who rained blows and hammerings on the outside of it. My Master had dismounted, and while he called his orders the blood ran down his face from a cut above the forehead. As for the smoking horses on which they had ridden in, these stood huddling, rubbing shoulders, and facing all ways like a knot of frightened colts.

All the bolts being shut, my Master steps to the grille and speaking through it, "Saint Aubyn," says

he, "between gentlemen there are fitter ways to dispute than brawling with servants. I am no thief or robber; as you may satisfy yourself by search and question, bringing, if you will, Mr. Godolphin and three men to help you under protection of my word. If you will not, then I am ready for you at any time of your choosing. But I warn you that, if any man offers further violence to my gate, I send Master Tonkin to melt the lead, of which I have good store. So make your choice."

He said it in English, and few of those who heard him could understand. And after a moment Saint Aubyn, who was a very courteous gentleman for all his not temper, made answer in the same tongue.

"If I cannot take your word, Pengersick," said he, "be sure no searching will satisfy me. But that some of your men have made off with the goods, with or without your knowledge, I am convinced."

"If they have——" my Master was beginning, when Godolphin's sneering laugh broke in on his words from the other side of the gate.

"'*If!*' '*If!*' There are too many *if's* in this parley for my stomach. Look ye, Pengersick, will you give up the goods or no?"

Upon this my Master changed his tone. "As for Mr. Godolphin, I have this only to say: the goods are neither his nor mine; they are not in my keeping, nor do I believe them stolen by any of my men. For the words that have passed between us to-day, he knows me well enough to be sure I shall hold him to account, and that soon: and to that assurance commending him, I wish you both a very good day."

So having said, he strolled off towards the stables, leaving me to listen at the gate, where by and by, after

some disputing, I had the pleasure to hear our besiegers draw off and trot away towards Godolphin. Happening to take a glance upwards at the house-front, I caught sight of the strange lady at the window of the guest-chamber, which faced towards the south-east. She was leaning forth and gazing after them: but, hearing my Master's footsteps as he came from the stables, she withdrew her eyes from the road and nodded down at him gaily.

But as he went indoors to join her at breakfast I ran after, and catching him in the porch, besought him to have his wound seen to. "And after that," said I, "there is another wounded man who needs your attention. Unless you take his deposition quickly, I fear, sir, it may be too late."

His eyebrows went up at this, but contracted again upon the twinge of his wound. "I will attend to him first," said he shortly, and led the way to the strong room. "Hallo!" was his next word, as he came to the door—for in my perturbation and hurry I had forgotten to lock it.

"He is too weak to move," I stammered, as my poor excuse.

"Nevertheless it was not well done," he replied, pushing past me.

The prisoner lay on his pallet, gasping, with his eyes wide open in a rigor. "Take her away!" he panted. "Take her away! She has been here!"

"Hey?" I cried: but my Master turned on me sharply. To this day I know not how much of evil he suspected.

"I will summon you if I need you. For the present you will leave us here alone."

Nor can I tell what passed between them for the next half an hour. Only that when he came forth my Master's face was white and set beneath its dry smear of blood. Passing me, who waited at the end of the corridor, he said, but without meeting my eyes:

"Go to him. The end is near."

I went to him. He lay pretty much as I had left him, in a kind of stupor; out of which, within the hour, he started suddenly and began to rave. Soon I had to send for a couple of our stablemen; and not too soon. For by this he was foaming at the mouth and gnashing, the man in him turned to beast and trying to bite, so that we were forced to strap him to his bed. I shall say no more of this, the most horrible sight of my life. The end came quietly, about six in the evening: and we buried the poor wretch that night in the orchard under the chapel wall.

All that day, as you may guess, I saw nothing of the strange lady. And on the morrow until dinner-time I had but a glimpse of her. This was in the forenoon. She stood, with her hound beside her, in an embrasure of the wall, looking over the sea: to the eye a figure so maidenly and innocent and (in a sense) forlorn that I recalled Gil Perez' tale as the merest frenzy, and wondered how I had come to listen to it with any belief. Her seaward gaze would be passing over the very spot where we had laid him: only a low wall hiding the freshly turned earth. My Master had ridden off early; I could guess upon what errand.

He returned shortly after noon, unhurt and looking like a man satisfied with his morning's work. And at dinner, watching his demeanour narrowly, I was satisfied that either he had not heard the prisoner's

tale or had rejected it utterly. For he took his seat in the gayest spirits, and laughed and talked with the stranger throughout the meal. And afterwards, having fetched an old lute which had been his mother's, he sat and watched her fit new strings to it, rallying her over her tangle. But when she had it tuned and, touching it softly, began the first of those murmuring heathenish songs to which I have since listened so often, pausing in my work, but never without a kind of terror at beauty so far above my comprehending—why, then my Master laughed no more.

He had met Godolphin that morning and run him through the thigh. And that bitterest enemy of ours still wore a crutch a month later, when we faced Master Porson before the Commissioner in Saint Aubyn's house at Clowance. At that conference (not to linger over the time between) the Commissioner showed himself pardonably suspicious of us all. He was a dry, foxy-faced man, who spoke little and at times seemed scarce to be listening; but rather turning over some deeper matters in his brain behind his grey-coloured eyes. But at length, Mr. Saint Aubyn having twice or thrice made mention of the Lady Alicia and her presence on the beach, this Sir Nicholas looked up at me sharply, and said he—"By all accounts this lady was a passenger shipped by the master at Dunquerque. It seems she was a foreign lady of birth, bearing letters commendatory to the Court of Lisbon."

"That was his story of it," Master Porson assented. "I was below and busy with the cargo at the time, and knew nothing of her presence on board until we had cleared the harbour."

"And at this moment she is a guest of Mr. Milliton's

at Pengersick?" pursued Sir Nicholas, still with his eyes upon mine. I bowed, feeling mightily uneasy. "It is most necessary that I should take her evidence —and Mr. Milliton's. In all the statements received by me Mr. Milliton bears no small part: his house lies at no distance from Gunwallo Cove: and I have heard much of your Cornish courtesy. It appears to me singular, therefore, that although I have been these four days in his neighbourhood no invitation has reached me to visit his house and have audience with him: and it argues small courtesy that on coming here to-day in full expectation of seeing him, I should be fobbed off with a deputy."

"Though but a deputy," I protested, "I have my Master's entire confidence."

"No doubt," said he drily. "But it would be more to the point if you had mine. It is imperative that I see Mr. Milliton of Pengersick and hear his evidence, as also this Lady Alicia's: and you may bear him my respects and say that I intend to call upon him to-morrow."

I bowed. It was all I could do: since the truth (for different reasons) could neither be told to him nor to the others. And the truth was that for two days my Master and the strange lady had not been seen at Pengersick! They had vanished, and two horses with them: but when and how I neither knew nor dared push inquiries to discover. Only the porter could have told me had he chosen; but when I questioned him he looked cunning, shook his head, and as good as hinted that I would be wiser to question nobody, but go about my business as if I shared the secret.

And so I did, imitating the porter's manner even

before Dame Tresize, the housekeeper. But it rankled that, even while instructing me—as he did on the eve of his departing—in the part I was to play at Clowance, my Master had chosen to shut me out of this part of his confidence. And now on the road home from Clowance I carried an anxious heart as well as a sore. To tell the truth—that my Master was away—I had not been able, knowing how prompt Saint Aubyn and Godolphin might be to take the advantage and pay us an unwelcome visit. "And indeed," thought I, "if my Master hides one thing from me, why not another? The stuff may indeed be stored with us: though I will not believe it without proof." The Commissioner would come, beyond a doubt. To discover my Master's absence would quicken his suspicions: to deny him admittance would confirm them.

I reached home, yet could get no sleep for my quandary. But a little before the dawning, while I did on my clothes, there came a knocking at the gate followed by a clatter of hoofs in the courtyard; and hurrying down, with but pause to light my lantern, I found my Master there and helping the strange lady to dismount, with the porter and two sleepy grooms standing by and holding torches. Beneath the belly of the lady's horse stood her hound, his tongue lolling and his coat a cake of mire. The night had been chilly and the nostrils of the hard-ridden beasts made a steam among the lights we held, while above us the upper frontage of the house stood out clear between the growing daylight and the waning moon poised above the courtlege-wall in the south-west.

"Hey! Is that Paschal?" My Master turned as one stiff with riding. His face was ghastly pale, yet

full of a sort of happiness: and I saw that his clothes were disordered and his boots mired to their tops. "Good luck!" cried he, handing the lady down. "We can have supper at once."

"Supper?" I repeated it after him.

"Or breakfast—which you choose. Have the lights lit in the hall, and a table spread. My lady will eat and drink before going to her room."

"'My lady'?" was my echo again.

"Just so—my lady, and my wife, and henceforward your Mistress. Lead the way, if you please! Afterwards I will talk."

I did as I was ordered: lit the lights about the dais, spread the cloth with my own hands, fetched forth the cold meats and—for he would have no servants aroused—waited upon them in silence and poured the wine, all in a whirl of mind. My Mistress (as I must now call her) showed no fatigue, though her skirts were soiled as if they had been dragged through a sea of mud. Her eyes sparkled and her bosom heaved as she watched my Master, who ate greedily. But beyond the gallant words with which he pledged her welcome home to Pengersick nothing was said until, his hunger put away, he pushed back his chair and commanded me to tell what had happened at Clowance: which I did, pointing out the ticklish posture of affairs, and that for a certainty the Commissioner might be looked for in within a few hours.

"Well," said my Master, "I see no harm in his coming, nor any profit. The goods are not with us: never were with us: and there's the end of it."

But I was looking from him to my Mistress, who with bent brows sat studying the table before her.

"Master Paschal," said she after a while, as one awaking from thought, "has done his business zealously and well. I will go to my room now and rest: but let me be aroused when this visitor comes, for I believe that I can deal with him." And she rose and walked away to the stair, with the hound at her heels.

A little later I saw my Master to his room: and after that had some hours of leisure in which to fret my mind as well over what had happened as what was likely to. It was hard on noon when the Commissioner arrived: and with him Master Porson. I led them at once to the hall and, setting wine before them, sent to learn when my Master and Mistress would be pleased to give audience. The lady came down almost at once, looking very rosy and fresh. She held a packet of papers, and having saluted the Commissioner graciously, motioned me to seat myself at the table with paper and pen.

Sir Nicholas began with some question touching her business on board the *Saint Andrew*: and in answer she drew a paper from the top of her packet. It was spotted with sea-water, but (as I could see) yet legible. The Commissioner studied it, showed it to Master Porson (who nodded), and handing it back politely, begged her for some particulars concerning the wreck.

Upon this she told the story clearly and simply. There had been a three days' tempest: the ship had gone ashore in such and such a manner: a great part of the cargo had undoubtedly been landed. It was on the beach when she had left it under conduct of Mr. Milliton, who had shown her great kindness. On whomsoever its disappearance might be charged, of her host's innocence she could speak.

My Master appearing just now saluted the Commissioner and gave his version very readily.

"You may search my cellars," he wound up, "and, if you please, interrogate my servants. My livery is known by everyone in this neighbourhood to be purple and tawny. The seamen can tell you if any of their assailants wore these colours."

"They assure me," said Sir Nicholas, "that the night was too dark for them to observe colours: and for that matter to disguise them would have been a natural precaution. There was a wounded man brought to your house—one Gil Perez, the boatswain."

"He is dead, as you doubtless know, of a bite received from this lady's hound as he was attacking her with a knife."

"But why, madam"—the factor turned to my Mistress—"should this man have attacked you?"

She appeared to be expecting this question, and drew from her packet a second paper, which she unfolded quietly and spread on the table, yet kept her palm over the writing on it while she answered, "Those who engage upon missions of State must look to meet with attacks, but not to be asked to explain them. The mob at Dunquerque pursued me upon a ridiculous charge, yet was wisely incited by men who invented it, knowing the true purpose of my mission." She glanced from the Commissioner to Master Porson. "Sir Nicholas Fleming—surely I have heard his name spoken, as of a good friend to the Holy Father and not too anxious for the Emperor's marriage with Mary Tudor?" The Commissioner started in his chair, while she turned serenely upon his companion. "And Master Porson," she continued, "as a faithful servant

of His Majesty of Portugal will needs be glad to see a princess of Portugal take Mary Tudor's place. Eh?" —for they were eyeing each the other like two detected schoolboys—"It would seem, sirs, that though you came together, you were better friends than you guessed. Glance your eye, Master Porson, over this paper which I shall presently entrust to you for furtherance; and you will agree with Sir Nicholas that the prudent course for both of you is to forget, on leaving this house, that any such person as I was on board the *Saint Andrew*."

The two peered into the parchment and drew back. "The Emperor——" I heard the Commissioner mutter with an intake of breath.

"And, as you perceive, in his own handwriting." She folded up the paper and, replacing it, addressed my Master. "Your visitors, sir, deserve some refreshment for their pains and courtesy."

And that was the end of the conference. What that paper contained I know as little as I know by what infernal sorcery it was prepared. Master Porson folded it up tight in his hand, glancing dubiously at Sir Nicholas. My lady stood smiling upon the both for a moment, then dismissed me to the kitchens upon a pretended errand. They were gone when I returned, nor did I again set eyes upon the Commissioner or the factor. It is true that the Emperor did about this time break his pledge with our King Henry and marry a princess of Portugal; and some of high office in England were not sorry therefor. But of this enough.

As the days wore on and we heard no more of the wreck, my Master and Mistress settled down to that retirement from the world which is by custom allowed

to the newly married, but which with them was to last to the end. A life of love it was; but—God help us! —no life of happiness; rather, in process of days, a life of torment. Can I tell you how it was? At first to see them together was like looking through a glass upon a picture; a picture gallant and beautiful yet removed behind a screen and not of this world. Suppose now that by little and little the glass began to be flawed, or the picture behind it to crumble (you could not tell which) until when it smiled it smiled wryly, until rocks toppled and figures fell askew, yet still kept up their pretence of play against the distorted woodland. Nay, it was worse than this: fifty times worse. For while the fair show tottered, my Master and Mistress clung to their love; and yet it was just their love which kept the foundations rocking.

They lived for each other. They neither visited nor received visits. Yet they were often, and by degrees oftener, apart; my Master locked up with his books, my Mistress roaming the walls with her hound or seated by her lattice high on the seaward side of the castle. Sometimes (but this was usually on moonlit nights or windless evenings when the sun sank clear to view over our broad bay) she would take up her lute and touch it to one of those outlandish love-chants with which she had first wiled my Master's heart to her. As time went on, stories came to us that these chants, which fell so softly on the ears of us as we went about the rooms and gardens, had been heard by fishermen riding by their nets far in the offing—so far away (I have heard) as the Scillies; and there were tales of men who, as they listened, had seen the ghosts of drowned mariners rising and falling on the moon-rays,

or floating with their white faces thrown back while they drank in the music; yea, even echoing the words of the song in whispers like the flutter of birds' wings.

When first the word crept about that she was a witch I cannot certainly say. But in time it did; and, what is more—though I will swear that no word of Gil Perez' confession ever passed my lips—the common folk soon held it for a certainty that the cargo saved from the *Saint Andrew* had been saved by her magic only; that the plate and rich stuffs seen by my own eyes were but cheating *simulacra*, and had turned into rubbish at midnight, scarce an hour before the assault on the Portuguese.

I have wondered since if 'twas this rumour and some belief in it which held Messrs. Saint Aubyn and Godolphin from offering any further attack on us. You might say that it was open to them, so believing, to have denounced her publicly. But in our country Holy Church had little hold—scarce more than the King's law itself in such matters; and within my memory it has always come easier to us to fear witchcraft than to denounce it. Also (and it concerns my tale) the three years which followed the stranding of the *Saint Andrew* were remarkable for a great number of wrecks upon our coast. In that short time we of our parish and the men of St. Hilary upon our north were between us favoured with no fewer than fourteen; the most of them vessels of good burden. Of any hand in bringing them ashore I know our gentry to have been innocent. Still, there were pickings; and finding that my Master held aloof from all share in such and (as far as could be) held his servants aloof, our neighbours, though not

accepting this for quittance, forbore to press the affair of the *Saint Andrew* further than by spreading injurious tales and whispers.

The marvel was that we of Pengersick (who reaped nothing of this harvest) fell none the less under suspicion of decoying the vessels ashore. More than once in my dealings with the fishermen and tradesmen of Market Jew, I happened on hints of this; but nothing which could be taken hold of until one day a certain Peter Chynoweth of that town, coming drunk to Pengersick with a basket of fish, blurted out the tale. Said he, after I had beaten him down to a reasonable price, "'Twould be easy enough, one would think, to spare an honest man a groat of the fortune Pengersick makes on these dark nights."

"Thou lying thief!" said I. "What new slander is this?"

"Come, come," says he, looking roguish; "that won't do for me that have seen the false light on Cuddan Point more times than I can count; and so has every fisherman in the bay."

Well, I kicked him through the gate for it, and flung his basket after him; but the tale could not be so dismissed. "It may be," thought I, "some one of Pengersick has engaged upon this wickedness on his own account"; and for my Master's credit I resolved to keep watch.

I took therefore the porter into my secret, who agreed to let me through the gate towards midnight without telling a soul. I took a sheepskin with me and a poignard for protection; and for a week, from midnight to dawn, I played sentinel on Cuddan Point, walking to and fro, or stretched under the lee of a rock

whence I could not miss any light shown on the headland, if Peter Chynoweth's tale held any truth.

By the eighth trial I had pretty well made up my mind (and without astonishment) that Peter Chynoweth was a liar. But scarcely had I reached my post that night when, turning, I descried a radiance as of a lantern, following me at some fifty paces. On the instant I gripped my poignard and stepped behind a boulder. The light drew nearer, came, and passed me. To my bewilderment it was no lantern, but an open flame, running close along the turf and too low for anyone to be carrying it: nor was the motion that of a light which a man carries. Moreover, though it passed me within half a dozen yards and lit up the stone I stood behind, I saw nobody and heard no footstep, though the wind (which was south-westerly) blew from it to me. In this breeze the flame quivered, though not violently but as it were a ball of fire rolling with a flickering crest.

It went by, and I followed it at something above walking pace until upon the very verge of the headland, where I had no will to risk my neck, it halted and began to be heaved up and down much like the poop-light of a vessel at sea. In this play it continued for an hour at least; then it came steadily back towards me by the way it had gone, and as it came I ran upon it with my dagger. But it slipped by me, travelling at speed towards the mainland; whither I pelted after it hot-foot, and so across the fields towards Pengersick. Strain as I might, I could not overtake it; yet contrived to keep it within view, and so well that I was bare a hundred yards behind when it came under the black shadow of the castle and without pause glided across

the dry moat and so up the face of the wall to my lady's window, which there overhung. And into this window it passed before my very eyes and vanished.

I know not what emboldened me, but from the porter's lodge I went straight up to my Master's chamber, where (though the hour must have been two in the morning or thereabouts) a light was yet burning. Also—but this had become ordinary—a smell of burning gums and herbs filled the passage leading to his door. He opened to my knock, and stood before me in his dressing-gown of sables—a tall figure of a man and youthful, though already beginning to stoop. Over his shoulder I perceived the room swimming with coils of smoke which floated in their wreaths from a brazier hard by the fire-place.

I think his first motion was to thrust me away; but I caught him by the hand, and with many protestations broke into my tale, giving him no time to forbid me. And presently he drew me inside, and shutting the door, stood upright by the table, facing me with his fingers on the rim as if they rested there for support.

"Paschal," said he, when at length I drew back, "this must not come to my lady's ears. She has been ailing of late."

"Ay, sir, and long since: of a disease past your curing."

"God help us! I hope not," said he; then broke out violently: "She is innocent, Paschal: innocent as a child!"

"Innocent!" cried I, in a voice which showed how little I believed.

"Paschal," he went on, "you are my servant, but my friend also, I hope. Nay, nay, I know. I swear

to you, then, these things do but happen in her sleep. In her waking senses she is mine, as one day she shall be mine wholly. But at night, when her will is dissolved in sleep, the evil spirit wakes and goes questing after its master."

"Mahound?" I stammered, quaking.

"Be it Satan himself," said he, very low and resolute, "I shall win her from him, though my own soul be the ransom."

"Dear my Master," I began, and would have implored him on my knees; but he pointed to the door. "I shall win her," he repeated. "What you have seen to-night happens more rarely now. Moreover, the summer is beginning——"

He paused: yet I had gathered his meaning. "There will be less peril for the ships for a while," said I.

Said he: "To *them* she intends no harm. It is for her master the light waves. Paschal, I am an unhappy man!" He flung a hand to his forehead, but recovering himself peered at me under the shadow of it. "If you could watch—often—as you have done to-night —you might protect others from seeing——"

The wisdom of this at least I saw, and gave him my promise readily. Upon this understanding (for no more could be had) I withdrew me.

The next day, therefore, I moved my bed to a turret-chamber on the angle of the south-eastern wall whence I could keep my lady's window in view. I was never a man to need much sleep: but if, through the year which followed, the apparition escaped once or twice without my cognisance, I dare take oath this was the extent of it. It appeared more rarely, as my Master had promised: and in the end (I think) scarce above

once a month. In form it never varied from the cresseted globe of flame I had first seen; and always it took the path across the fields towards Cuddan Point. No sound went with it, or announced its going or return: and while it was absent, my lady's chamber would be utterly dark and silent. My custom was not to follow it (which I had proved to be useless), but to let myself out and patrol the walls, satisfying myself that no watchers lurked about the castle. I understood now that Pengersick was reported throughout the neighbourhood to be haunted: and such a report is not the worst protection. These vague tales kept aloof the country people who, but for them, had almost certainly happened on the secret. And night after night while I watched, my Master wrestled with the Evil One in his room.

The last time I saw the apparition was on the night of May 10th, 1529, more than three years after my lady's first coming to Pengersick. I was prepared for it: for she had been singing at her window a great part of the afternoon, and I had learnt to be warned by this mood. The night was a dark one, with flying clouds and a stiff breeze blowing up from the south-east. The flame left my lady's window at the usual hour—a few minutes after midnight—but returned some while before its due time. In ordinary it would be away for an hour and a half, or from that to two hours, but this night I had scarcely begun my rounds before I saw it returning across the fields. Nor was this the only surprise. For as I watched it up the wall and saw it gain my lady's window, I heard the hound within lift up its voice in a long, shuddering howl.

I lost no time, but made my way to my Master's

room. He, too, had heard the dog's howl, and was strangely perturbed. "It means something. It means something," he kept repeating. He had already run to his wife's chamber, but found her in a deep slumber and the hound (which always slept on the floor at her bed's foot) composing itself to sleep again, with jowl dropped on its fore-paws.

The next morning I had fixed to ride into the Market Jew to fetch a packet of books which was waiting there for my Master. But at the entrance of the town I found the people in great commotion, the cause of which turned out to be a group of Turk men gathered at the hither end of the causeway leading to the Mount. One told me they were Moslems (which indeed was apparent at first sight) and that their ship had run ashore that night, under the Mount; but with how much damage was doubtful. She lay within sight, in a pretty safe position, and not so badly fixed but I guessed the next tide would float her if her bottom were not broken. The Moslems (nine in all) had rowed ashore in their boat and landed on the causeway; but with what purpose they had no chance to explain: for the inhabitants, catching sight of their knives and scimitars, could believe in nothing short of an intent to murder and plunder; and taking courage in numbers, had gathered (men and women) to the causeway-head to oppose them. To be sure these fears had some warrant in the foreigners' appearance: who with their turbans, tunics, dark faces and black naked legs made up a show which Market Jew had never known before nor (I dare say) will again.

Nor had the mildness of their address any effect but to raise a fresh commotion. For, their leader

advancing with outstretched hands and making signals that he intended no mischief but rather sued for assistance, at once a cry went up, "The Plague!" "The Plague!" at which I believe the crowd would have scattered like sheep had not a few sturdy volunteers with pikes and boathooks forbidden his nearer approach.

Into this knot the conference had locked itself when I rode up and—the crowd making way for me—addressed the strangers in the *lingua Franca*, explaining that my Master of Pengersick was a magistrate and would be forward to help them either with hospitality or in lending aid to get their ship afloat; further that they need have no apprehension of the crowd, which had opposed them in fear, not in churlishness; yet it might be wise for the main body to stay and keep guard over the cargo while their spokesman went with me to Pengersick.

To this their leader at once consented; and we presently set forth together, he walking by my horse with an agile step and that graceful bearing which I had not seen since my days of travel: a bearded swarthy man, extraordinarily handsome in Moorish fashion and distinguished from his crew not only by authority as patron of the ship, but by a natural dignity. I judged him about forty. Me he treated with courtesy, yet with a reticence which seemed to say he reserved his speech for my Master. Of the wreck he said nothing except that his ship had been by many degrees out of her bearings: and knowing that the Moorish disasters in Spain had thrown many of their chiefs into the trade of piracy I was contented to smoke such an adventurer in this man, and set him down for one better at fighting than at navigation.

With no more suspicion than this I reached Pengersick and, bestowing the stranger in the hall, went off to seek my Master. For the change that came over my dear lord's face as he heard my errand I was in no way prepared. It was terrible.

"Paschal," he cried, sinking into a chair and spreading both hands helplessly on the table before him, "it is *he*! Her time is come, and mine!"

It was in vain that I reasoned, protesting (as I believed) that the stranger was but a chance pirate cast ashore by misadventure; and as vain that, his fears infecting me, I promised to go down and get rid of the fellow on some pretence.

"No," he insisted, "the hour is come. I must face it: and what is more, Paschal, I shall win. Another time I shall be no better prepared. Bring him to my room and then go and tell my lady that I wish to speak with her."

I did so. On ushering in the stranger I saw no more than the bow with which the two men faced each other: for at once my Master signalled me to run on my further errand. Having delivered my message at my lady's door, I went down to the hall, and lingering there, saw her pass along the high gallery above the dais towards my lord's room, with the hound at her heels.

Thence I climbed the stair to my own room: locked the door and anon unlocked it, to be ready at sudden need. And there I paced hour after hour, without food, listening. From the courtyard came the noise of the grooms chattering and splashing: but from the left wing, where lay my Master's rooms, no sound at all. Twice I stole out along the corridors and hung

about the stair-head: but could hear nothing, and crept back in fear to be caught eavesdropping.

It was about five in the afternoon (I think), all was still in the courtyard, when I heard the click of a latch and, running to the window, saw the porter closing his wicket gate. A minute later, on a rise beyond the wall, I spied the Moor. His back was towards the castle and he was walking rapidly towards Market Jew: and after him padded my lady's hound.

I hurried along the passages and knocked at my Master's door. No one answered. I could not wait to knock again, but burst it open.

. . . . .

On the floor at my feet lay my Master, and hard by the window my Mistress with her hands crossed upon a crucifix. My Master had no crucifix: but his face wore a smile—a happier one than it had worn for years.

FROZEN MARGIT

A Narrative of the sufferings of Mr. Obed Lanyon, of Vellingey-Saint Agnes, Cornwall; Margit Lanyon, his wife; and seventeen persons (mostly Americans) shipwrecked among the Quinaiult Tribes of the N.W. Coast of America, in the winter of 1807–8. With some remarkable Experiences of the said Margit Lanyon, formerly Pedersen. Written by the Survivor, Edom Lanyon, sometime a Commander in the service of the Honourable East India Company.

My twin brother Obed and I were born on the 21st of March, 1759 (he being the elder by a few minutes), at Vellingey-St. Agnes, or St. Ann's, a farm on the north coast of Cornwall, owned and cultivated by our father, Renatus Lanyon. Our mother was a Falmouth woman, daughter of a ship's captain of that port: and I suppose it was this inclined us to a seafaring life. At any rate, soon after our fifteenth birthday we sailed (rather against our father's wish) on a short coasting voyage with our grandfather—whose name was William Dustow.

A second voyage in the early summer of 1776 took us as far as the Thames. It happened that the famous Captain Cook was just then recruiting for his third and (as it proved) his last voyage of discovery. This set us talking and planning, and the end was that we stole ashore and offered ourselves. Obed had the luck

to be picked. Though very like in face, I was already the taller by two inches; and no doubt the Captain judged I had outgrown my strength. But it surprised me to be rejected when Obed was taken; and disappointed me more: for, letting alone the prospect of the voyage, we two (as twins, and our parents' only children) were fond of each other out of the common degree, and had never thought to be separated.

To speak first of Obed:—Captain Cook put some questions, and finding that we were under our grandfather's care, would do nothing without his consent. We returned to the ship and confessed to the old man, who pretended to be much annoyed. But next day he put on his best clothes and went in search of the great seaman, to Whitehall; and so the matter was arranged. Obed sailed in July on board the *Discovery*; shared the dangers of that voyage, in which the ships followed up the N.W. Coast of America and pushed into Behring's Strait beyond the 70th parallel; was a witness, on February 4th, 1779, of his commander's tragical end; and returned to England in October, 1780. Eleven years later he made another voyage to the same N.W. American Coast; this time as master's mate under Vancouver, who had kept an interest in him since they sailed together under Cook, and thought highly of him as a practical navigator and draughtsman. It was my brother who, under Vancouver, drew up the first chart of the Straits of Fuca, which Cook had missed: and I have been told (by a Mr. G——, a clerk to the Admiralty) that on his return he stood well for a lieutenant's commission—the rule of the Service being stretched now and then to favour these circumnavigating seamen, many of whom worked their way aft

from the hawse-hole to the quarter-deck. But my father and mother dying just then, and the former having slipped a particular request into his will, Obed threw up the sea and settled down in Vellingey as a quiet yeoman farmer.

Meanwhile, in 1779, I had entered the sea service of the Honourable East India Company; and with passable good fortune had risen in it pretty fast. Enough to say, that by the spring of 1796 I was looking forward to the command of a ship. Just then my fortune deserted me. In a sudden fear of French invasion, our Government bought the four new ships which the Company had building (and a bad bargain they proved). This put a stop for the time to all chance of promotion; and a sharp attack of jaundice falling on top of my disappointments, I took the usual decrease of pay and the Board's promise to remember my services on a proper occasion, and hauled ashore to Vellingey for a holiday and a thorough refit of health.

I believe that the eight or nine following months which Obed and I spent together were the happiest in our two lives. He was glad enough to shoulder off the small business of the farm and turn—as I have seen so many men play, in a manner, at the professions they have given over—to his favourite amusement of sounding the coast of Vellingey and correcting the printed charts. He kept a small lugger mainly for this purpose, and plied her so briskly that he promised to know the sea-bottom between Kelsey Head and Godrevy Rock better than his own fields. As for me, after years of salt water and stumping decks, I asked nothing better than to steer a plough and smell broken

soil, and drowse after supper in an arm-chair, with good tobacco and Obed for company.

In this way we passed the winter of 1796–7; until the lambing season, which fell midway in February. The year opened wet, with fresh south-westerly winds, which in the second week chopped suddenly; and for four days a continuous freezing gale blew on us from the north-west. It was then that the lambs began to drop; and for three nights I exchanged pipe and fireside for a lantern and the lower corner of Friar's Parc at the back of the towans, where the ewes were gathered in the lew.[1] They kept us so busy that for forty-eight hours we neither changed our clothes (at least, I did not) nor sat down to a meal. The sand about Vellingey is always driving, more or less; and the gale so mixed it up with fine snow that we made our journeys to and from the house, so to speak, blindfold, and took our chance of the drifts. But the evening of the 11th promised better. The wind dropped, and in an hour fell to a flat calm: then, after another hour, began to draw easily off shore—the draught itself being less noticeable than the way in which it smoothed down the heavy sea running. Though the cold did not lift, the weather grew tolerable once more: and each time I crossed the town-place[2] with a lamb in my arms, I heard the surf running lower and lower in the porth below Vellingey.

By daybreak (the 12th) it was fallen to nothing: the sky still holding snow, but sky and sea the same colour: a heavy bluish grey, like steel. I was coming over the towans, just then, with a lamb under either arm (making twelve, that night) when I happened to

[1] Shelter from the wind. [2] Farmyard.

look seaward, and there saw a boat tossing, about a gunshot from the shore.

She was a long-boat, painted white; very low in the sheer, and curved at stem and stern like a Norwegian; her stern rounded off with a tiny transom, and scarcely bluffer than her bows. She carried a mast, stepped right forward; but no sail. She was full of people. I counted five sitting, all white with snow—one by the mast, three amidships, and one in the stern sheets, steering. At least, he had a hand on the tiller: but the people had given over pulling, and the boat without steerage-way was drifting broadside-on towards the shore with the set of the tide.

While I stood conning her, up at the house the back-door opened, and my brother stepped out and across the yard to milk the cows. His milk-pails struck against the door-post, and sounded as clear as bells. I shouted to him and pointed towards the boat: and after looking a moment, he set down his pails and started off at a run, down towards the porth. I then hurried towards the house, where I found Selina, our old housekeeper, in the kitchen, tending the lambs with warm milk. Handing the new-comers over to her, I caught up a line and made off hot-foot after Obed.

At low water (and the tide had now scarcely an hour to ebb) the sands in Vellingey Porth measure a good half-mile from the footbridge at its head to the sea at its base. My legs were longer than Obed's; but I dare say he had arrived five minutes ahead of me. He was standing and calling to the boat's crew to get out an oar and pull her head-to-sea: for although the smoothing wind had taken most of the danger out of the breakers, they were quite able to capsize and roll

over any boat that beached herself in that lubberly fashion.

I ran up panting, and shouted with him—"Pull her round head-to-sea, and back her in!"

Not a man moved or lifted a hand. The next moment, a wave tilted and ran a dozen yards with her, but mercifully passed before it broke. A smaller one curved on the back-draught and splashed in over her gunwale as she took ground. But what knocked the wind out of our sails was this—As the first wave canted her up, two men had rolled out of her like logs; and the others, sitting like logs, had never so much as stirred to help!

"Good Lord!" I called out, and fumbled with my line. "What's the meaning of it?"

"The meaning is," said Obed, "they're dead men, every mother's son! They're frozen," said he: "I've seen frozen seamen before now."

"I'll have in the boat, anyway," I said. "Here, catch hold and pay out!" Running in, I reached her just as she lifted again; and managed to slew her nose in-shore, but not in time to prevent half-a-hogshead pouring over her quarter. This wave knocked her broadside-on again, and the water shipped made her heavier to handle. But by whipping my end of the line round the thwart in which her mast was stepped, for Obed to haul upon, and myself heaving at her bows, we fetched her partly round as she lifted again, and ran her into the second line of breakers, which were pretty well harmless.

"How many on board?" Obed sang out.

"Five!" called I, having counted them. Up to this I had had enough to do with the boat; besides

looking after myself. For twice the heave had tilled me up to the armpits, and once lifted me clean off my feet; and I had no wish to try swimming in my sea-boots. "Five," said I: "and two overboard—that makes seven. Come and look here!"

"Tend to the boat first," he said. "I've seen frozen seamen."

"You never saw the likes of this," I answered. So he ran in beside me.

The boat had her name (or that of the ship she belonged to) painted in yellow and black on the gunwale strake by her port quarter—"MARGIT PEDERSEN, BERGEN": but by their faces we could not miss knowing to what country the poor creatures belonged. They were:

1. A tall man, under middle age; seated by the mast and leaning against it (his right arm frozen to it, in fact, from the elbow up) with his back towards the bows. The snow was heaped on his head and shoulders like a double cape. This one had no hair on his face; and his complexion being very fresh and pink, and his eyes wide open, it was hard to believe him dead. Indeed, while getting in the boat, I had to speak to him twice, to make sure.

2. A much older man, and shorter, with a rough grey beard. He sat in the stern sheets, with his right hand frozen on the tiller. Our folk had afterwards to unship the tiller when they came to lift him out: and carried him up to the house still holding it. Later on we buried it beside him. This man wore a good blue coat and black breeches; and at first we took him to be the captain. He turned out to be the mate, Knud Lote, who had put on his best clothes when it came to leaving the ship. His eyes were screwed up, and the brine had frozen over them, like a glaze, or a big pair of spectacles.

3. Against his knee rested the head of a third man—one of the three I had first seen sitting amidships. When the other two toppled overboard this one had slid off the thwart and fallen against the steersman. He was an oldish man, yellow and thin and marked with the small-pox; the only one in the boat who might have come from some other country than Norway. His eyes were cast down in a quiet way, and he seemed to be smiling. He wore a seaman's loose frock, ragged breeches, and sea-boots.

4 and 5. Stretched along the bottom-boards lay a tall young man with straw-coloured hair and beard: and in his arms, tightly clasped, and wrapped in a shawl and seaman's jacket, a young woman. Her arms were about the young man and her face pressed close and hidden against his side. He must have taken off his jacket to warm her; for the upper part of his body had no covering but a flannel shirt and singlet.

While we stood there the tide drained back, leaving the bows of the boat high and dry. As I remember, Obed was the first to speak; and he said, "She has beautiful hair." This was the bare truth: a great lock of it lay along the bottom-board like a stream of guineas poured out of a sack. He climbed into the boat and lifted the shawl from her face.

Those neighbours of ours, friends and acquaintances, who afterwards saw Margit Pedersen at Vellingey, and for whom this account is mainly written, will not need a description of her. Many disliked her: but nobody denied that she was a lovely woman; and I am certain that nobody could see her face and afterwards forget it. It was, then and always, very pale: but this had nothing to do with ill-health. In fact I am not sure it would have been noticeable but for the warm colour of her hair and her red lips and (especially) her eye-

brows and lashes, of a deep brown that seemed almost black. Her lips were blue with the cold, just now: but the contrast between her eyebrows and her pale face and yellow hair struck me at once and kept me wondering: until Obed startled me by dropping the shawl and falling on his knees beside her. "Good God, Dom!" he sang out: "the girl's alive!"

The next moment, of course, I was as wild as he. "Get her out, then," I cried, "and up to the house at once!"

"I can't loosen the man's arms!" Though less than a yard apart, we both shouted at the top of our voices.

"Nonsense!" I answered: but it was true all the same—as I found out when I stepped in to Obed's help. "We must carry up the pair as they are," I said. "There's no time to lose."

We lifted them out, and making a chair of our hands and wrists, carried them up to Vellingey; leaving the others in the boat, now for an hour well above reach of the tide. And here I must tell of something that happened on the way: the first sign of Obed's madness, as I may call it. All of a sudden he stopped and panted, from the weight of our load, I supposed. "Dom," he said, "I believe that nine men out of ten would kiss her!"

I told him not to be a fool, and we walked on. In the town-place we happened on the shepherd, Reuben Santo, and sent him off for help, and to look after the frozen people in the boat. The sight of us at the door nearly scared Selina into her grave: but we allowed her no time for hysterics. We laid the pair on a blanket before the open fire, and very soon Obed was trying to force some warm milk and brandy between the girl's lips. I think she swallowed a little: but the first time

she opened her eyes was when one of the lambs (which everyone had neglected for twenty minutes or so) tottered across the kitchen on his foolish legs and began to nuzzle at her face. Obed at the moment was trying to disengage the dead man's arms. A thought struck Selina at once. "Put the lamb close against her heart," she said. "That'll warm her more than any fire."

So we did, making the lamb lie down close beside her; and it had a wonderful effect. In less than half an hour her pulse grew moderately firm and she had even contrived to speak a word or two, but in Norwegian, which none of us understood. Obed by this time had loosened the dead man's arms; and we thought it best to get her upstairs to bed before the full sense of her misfortune should afflict her. Obed carried her up to the spare-room and there left her to Selina; while I saddled horse and rode in to Truro, for Doctor Mitchell.

Much of what followed is matter of public knowledge. Our folks carried the dead Norwegians up to Churchtown, including one of the two that had fallen overboard (the next tide washed him in: the other never came to land); and there buried them, two days later, in separate graves, but all close together. The boat being worthless, we sawed it in two just abaft the mast and set the fore-part over the centre grave, which was that of Captain Pedersen, the young man we had carried up with Margit. The mast rotted and fell, some years ago, although carefully stayed: but the boat, with the names painted on it, remains to this day. Also we set up a small wooden cross by each man's grave, with his name upon it. Margit was able, from our description, to plan out the right name for each.

On the third day an interpreter came over from Penzance. Margit could not yet leave her bed: and before he stepped up to question her, I took him aside and showed a small Norwegian Bible we had found in the pocket of the seaman's jacket to which she owed her life. On the first page was some foreign writing which I could not make out. The interpreter translated it: first the names "Margit Hansen to Nils Pedersen": and after them, this strange verse from the Song of Solomon—strange, I mean, to find written in such a place—"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine."

The interpreter, Mr. Scammell, went upstairs, and she told him her story. "Our vessel," she said (I give it in brief) "was the *Margit Pedersen*, brig. She belonged to me and was called after me. We were bound for the Tagus with a cargo of salted fish which I had bought at Bergen from the Lofoden smacks—fish for the Roman Catholics to eat in Lent. Nils Pedersen, the captain, was my husband: Knud Lote was mate." Mr. Scammell having expressed some surprise that so young a man should have been captain, she explained, "He was twenty-two. I made him captain. My father and mother died: they had not wished me to marry him. They were proud. But they left very little money, considering; and with it I bought the brig and cargo. She was an old craft, half rotten. We had fair weather, mostly, down the English Channel and almost to Ushant. There we met a strong southerly gale, and in the middle of it a pintle of our rudder gave way and the loose rudder damaged our stern-post. We tried to bear up for Falmouth, but she would not steer; and we drove up towards the

Irish Coast, just missing Scilly. On the 8th the wind changed to north-west and increased. That night, as Nils tried to lay to, she carried away her fore-mast, which had been shaky for days. She was now leaking fast. At noon on the 9th we managed to launch a boat, and abandoned her. She sank at four o'clock: we saw her go down. The weather grew colder, that night. I think it snowed all the time: and the seas were too heavy to let the boat run. The men pulled to keep her nose to them and the wind, and so she drifted. I forget when they gave over pulling. For a night and a day I baled steadily. After that I lay most of the time in the bottom of the boat. Our food was almost done. It was very cold. That is all I can remember."

And this, I think, was all we ever heard from her. On his return to Penzance, Mr. Scammell sent me a Norwegian dictionary; and with the help of it Obed and I soon managed to talk a little with her, in a mixture of Norwegian and English. But she never wanted to speak of the past, and fell silent whenever we spoke of it. What astonished me more was that, though she told us the names of the dead men, she showed no further interest in them. At first, knowing how weak she was, and fearing to distress her, I fought shy of the subject; but one day, towards the end of the third week—she being strong enough to walk a moderate distance—I plucked up courage and asked if she cared to come with me to the churchyard. She agreed, and that afternoon, after a heavy shower, we walked thither together. I feared what effect the first sight of her husband's grave might work on her feelings; and all the way kept wishing that we had omitted to set up the boat and mast. But she looked at them calmly, and at

the graves. "That is good," she said: "you have done great kindness to them. I will not come any more." And so she prepared to walk away.

I own that this seemed to me unfeeling. Outside the churchyard I pulled from my pocket the small Bible. "This belongs to you," I said: "I have kept it to help me with your language"—but I held it open at the fly-leaf. She glanced at it. "Oh yes, I gave it to Nils, my husband. You wish to keep it?" "You were very fond of him, to judge from this," I said; and halted, expecting her to be angry. But she halted too, and said quite coolly—looking at me straight—"Yes? Oh yes; very much."

That same evening I spoke to Obed as we sat alone with our pipes. "I suppose," said I as carelessly as I could, "Margit Pedersen will be leaving us before long." He looked up sharply, and began to shift the logs on the hearth. "What makes you say so?" he asked. "Well, she will have friends in Bergen, and business—" "Has she written to her friends?" he interrupted. "Not to my knowledge: but she won't be staying here for ever, I suppose." "When she chooses to go, she can. Are you proposing to turn her out? If so, I'd have you to mind that Vellingey is my house, and I am master here."

This was an unworthy thing to say, and he said it with a fury that surprised me. Obed and I had not quarrelled since we were boys. I put a stopper on my tongue, and went on smoking: and after a while he began to talk again in his natural way on ordinary matters.

Margit stayed on; and to all appearance our life at Vellingey fell back into its old groove. As a matter of

fact there was all the difference in the world—a difference felt before it was seen, and not to be summed up by saying that a woman sat at our table. I believe I may quite fairly lay the blame on Obed. For the first time in our lives he kept a part of his mind hidden from me; he made show enough of frankness in his talk, but I knew him far too well to miss the suspicion behind it. And his suspicion bred suspicion in me. Yet though I searched, I could find nothing amiss in his outward bearing. If he were indeed in love with the girl—her age, she told us, was twenty-one—he gave no sign upon which one could lay hold. And certainly Margit's bearing towards us was cool and friendly and impartial as the strictest could desire. Of the two, I had, perhaps, more of her company, simply because Obed spent most of his time in the lugger, while I worked in the fields and within easy reach of an afternoon's stroll. Margit would be busy with housework most of the morning, or in the kitchen, helping Selina —"domineering," Selina preferred to call it.

For, whatever our feelings, Selina had set her face against the new-comer from the first. She started, no doubt, with the old woman's whiddle that no good ever comes of a person saved from the sea. But as time went on she picked up plenty of other reasons for dislike. Margit took charge from the day she came downstairs, and had a cold way of seeing that her orders were attended to. With about twenty words of English she at once gave battle to Selina, who had bullied us two men from childhood; and routed her. The old woman kept up a running fight for a week before appealing to Obed, and this delay cost her everything. Obed flew in a rage that more than equalled her own, and had

the advantage to be unusual and quite unexpected by her. She ran from him to the kitchen, in tears; and thenceforth was a beaten woman, however much she might grumble at the "foreigner" and "interloper."

For me, I will confess, and have done with it, that before a month was out my interest in this pale foreign woman, who moved about the house so quietly and surely, had grown to a degree that troubled me. That Obed had suspected me before he had any cause made it no easier now to play a concealed game at cross-purposes; and no pleasanter. In the two months that followed I hated myself pretty often, and at times came near to despise myself for the thought that before long I might be hating Obed. This would never have done: and luckily I saw it in time. Towards the end of June I made application to the Board: and left Vellingey in July, to sail for Bombay on board the *Warren Hastings*, in my old capacity of first mate. My abandoning the field to Obed would deserve some credit, had Margit ever by word or look given me the slightest reason to hope. But she had not; indeed I hoped that she had never guessed the state of my feelings.

Eighteen months passed before I returned to Vellingey—this time on a short furlough. Obed had written constantly and with all the old familiarity; a good deal concerning Margit—her health, her walks, her household business—everything, in short, but what I expected and dreaded to hear. "Come," I said to myself, "five minutes' start in life and eighteen months in courtship is no such bad allowance for Obed. Perhaps he will allow me now to have *my* turn."

I had this thought in my head as I drew near Vellin-

gey in a light gig hired from the Truro postmaster. It was a rainy afternoon in January, and a boisterous north-wester blew the Atlantic weather in our teeth as we mounted the rise over Vellingey Church-town. My head being bent down, I did not observe the figure of a woman coming up the village street, but looked up on hearing the sound of her clogs close beside the gig. It was Selina, tearful, carrying a bundle.

"Whatever is the matter?" I asked, on pulling up.

"They've turned me to door!" she moaned. "My dear, they've turned me to door!"

She was tramping home to her cousins in St. Day parish. Not another night would she sleep at Vellingey—to be trampled on. Of course she accused the "foreign woman": but I, it seemed, had started the quarrel this time; or, rather, it started over the preparations for my home-coming—some trifling matter of cookery. Selina knew my tastes. Margit professed to know them better. Such are women.

I own that as I sent the poor soul on her way, with a promise that the gig should carry back her boxes from Vellingey and a secret resolve that she should return to us within a week, I could not avoid a foolish pleasure in the thought that Margit deemed my coming of such importance. Then it occurred to me that her position now as a single woman alone at Vellingey lay open to scandal. The sooner I tested my growing hopes, the better.

I did so, the second evening, after supper. Obed had stepped out to make the round of the farm buildings and lock up. Margit had removed the white cloth, and was setting the brass candlesticks and tobacco jar on the uncovered table.

"What is going to happen about Selina?" I asked, from my chair.

Margit set down a candlestick. "Selina has gone," she said quietly.

"But people will talk, if you stay here alone with us, or with Obed. You mustn't mind my saying this."

"Oh no. I suppose they will talk."

I stood up. "I take it," said I, "you cannot be quite blind to my feelings, Margit. I came home on purpose to speak to you: but perhaps, if it had not been for this, I might have put off speaking for some days. If you care for me at all, though, I think you can answer. My dear, if you will marry me it will make me a happy man."

She was fingering the candle-base, just touching the brass with her finger-tips and withdrawing them gently She looked up. "I rather thought," she said, "you would have spoken last night. Obed asked me this morning—he gave you that chance: and I have promised to marry him."

"Good Lord! but this is a question of *loving* a man!"

"I have never said that I like you better. I shall make Obed a very good wife."

Less than a minute later, Obed came into the room, after slamming the back-door loudly. He did not look at our faces: but I am sure that he knew exactly what had happened.

They were married in April, a fortnight after my leaving England on another voyage. We parted the best of friends; and in the course of the next seven years I spent most of my holidays with them. No married

life could well be smoother than was Obed's and Margit's in all this time. He worshipped her to fondness; and she, without the least parade of affection, seemed to make his comfort and well-being the business of her life. It hardly needs to be said that my unfortunate proposal was ignored by all of us as a thing that had never happened.

In October, 1802, I reached the height of my ambition, being appointed to the command of the Company's ship *Macartney*, engaged in the China traffic. I call her the *Macartney*; but the reader will presently see that I have reasons for not wishing to make public the actual name of this vessel, which, however, will be sufficiently familiar to all who knew me at that time and who have therefore what I may call a private interest in this narrative. For the same reason I shall say no more of her than that she was a new ship, Thames-built, and more than commonly fast; and that I commanded her from October, 1802, to June, 1806.

She carried passengers, of course: and in the autumn of 1805 it surprised and delighted me to hear from Obed that he and Margit had determined on a sea-voyage, and wished to book their passages to the Canton River and back in the *Macartney*. I had often given this invitation in jest: but such voyages merely for health and pleasure were then far from common. Yet there was no single impediment to their going. They had no children: they were well-to-do: they had now a hind, or steward (one Stephens), to whose care they might comfortably leave the farm. To be short, they sailed with me.

On the 2nd of May, 1806, the *Macartney* dropped anchor in the Canton River after a fast and prosperous

voyage. The events I have now to relate will appear least extraordinary to the reader who best understands under what conditions the English carry on their trade with China. Let me say, then, that in its jealousy of us foreign barbarians the Chinese Government confines our ships to the one port of Canton and reserves the right of nominating such persons as shall be permitted to trade with us. These Hong merchants (in number less than a dozen) are each and all responsible to the Emperor for any disturbance that may be committed by a person belonging to a foreign ship: and they in turn look for compensation to the European factors. So that, a Chinese mob being the most insolent in the world, and the spirit of British seamen proverbial, these factors often find themselves in situations of great delicacy, and sometimes of more than a little danger.

It happened that on the next day after our arrival a small party of us—Margit and Obed, the second officer, Mr. Tomlinson, and I—had taken a short stroll ashore and were returning to the boat, which lay ready by the landing, manned by six seamen. The coxswain brought the boat alongside: and I, on the lowest step of the landing-stage, stooped to hold her steady while Margit embarked. She and Obed waited on the step next above, with Mr. Tomlinson close behind. A small crowd had followed us: and just then one dirty Chinaman reached forward and with a word or two (no doubt indecent) laid his open palm on the back of Margit's neck. Quick as thought, she lifted a hand and dealt him a rousing box on the ear. I sprang up and pushed him back as he recovered. He slipped on the green ooze of the steps and fell. This was all I saw, for the

crowd made a rush and closed. Obed and Mr. Tomlinson had hurried Margit into the boat: I leapt after them: and we pushed off under a brisk shower of dirt and stones. We were soon out of range, and reached the ship without mishap.

Knowing the nature of a Chinese rabble, I felt glad enough that the affair had proved no worse: and thought little more of it until early next morning, when Mr. Findlater, the first officer, came with a puzzled face and reported that during the night someone had attached a boat, with a dead Chinaman in it, to the chain of our small bower anchor.

I went on deck at once. A good look at the corpse relieved me: for as far as my recollection served, it bore no resemblance to the man I had pushed on the landing. I told off two of the rowers of the previous day—the two whose position in the bows had given them the best view of the scuffle—to cut the thing adrift. They did so and came back with the report that they had never seen the dead man before in their lives. So I tried to feel easy.

But soon after breakfast, and almost in the full heat of the day, there came off a galley with two of the Hong merchants and no less a person than Mr. ——, the Chief of the English factory. He brought serious news. The boat had drifted up the river and had been recovered by a crowd of Chinese, who took out the dead man and laid him on the doorstep of the factory, clamouring that he had been killed, the day before, by an Englishwoman; and threatening, unless she were given up, to seize the first supercargo that came out and carry him off to be strangled.

I answered, describing the scuffle and declaring my

readiness to swear that the body bore no resemblance to the fellow whose ear Margit had boxed. But I knew how little this testimony would avail in a Chinese court. The two Hong merchants assured me that their brother, the *Macartney's* guarantor, was already in the hands of the magistrates, who had handcuffed him and were threatening him with the bamboo: that an interdiction lay on the *Macartney's* cargo, and Mr. —— himself ran no small risk of imprisonment.

Our position was at once absurd and extremely serious. To do him justice, Mr. —— at once agreed that there could be no question of delivering up Margit: the penalty of her offence, if proved to the satisfaction of the Chinese magistrates, being—I can hardly bring myself to write it—nothing short of strangulation. He could only promise to accept for the while the risks of delay and do his utmost to bribe the magistrates into compromising the matter for a small fine.

He proved as good as his word. For five weeks the *Macartney* lay at anchor without discharging a pennyweight of her cargo; and every day brought a new threat, edict, or proclamation. At the end of the first week the security merchant was allowed to send his agents to offer a reward of 10,000 dollars to any man of our crew who would swear to having seen the Englishwoman strike the deceased. The agents conducted their parley from a boat, and only made off on being threatened with a bucket of slops. I kept the ship's guns loaded, and set on a double watch, night and day. His wife's peril threw Obed into a state of apprehension so pitiable that I began to fear for his mind. Margit, on the other hand, behaved with the coolest composure: and I had some trouble in persuading her to remain

below decks and out of sight. She relied cheerfully on us and on the crew, every man of whom she had bound to her (I suppose by her remarkable beauty) in the completest loyalty.

In five weeks Mr. —— had spent at least twice as many hundreds of pounds; and still matters were at a stand when, one day, Mr. Tomlinson reported a boat under our quarter demanding speech with us. I went to the side and saw a tall lank-haired man, in a suit of white duck, standing in the stern-sheets with the tiller-lines in his hands.

"No pigtail on me, Cap!" he bawled. "I'm Oliphant Q. Wills, of the American barque *Independence*: and I want to come aboard." He pointed to his vessel, which had entered the river soon after us, and now lay, ready for sea, two cables distant from us.

I saw no reason for refusing; and in less than a minute he came running up the ladder, and introduced himself again. "Business," said he; so I led him to my cabin.

"Hallo!" said he, looking over the floor. "I observe you don't chew." He glanced at the stern-window. I opened it. Our talk then ran as follows:

Capt. W. "I've come to trade."

Self. "Then you have come, sir, to a very bad ship."

Capt. W. "I allowed you would say that. I know all about it, and came in consequence. I never miss a chance."

Self. "You wish to buy, of course."

Capt. W. "Not at all. I'm here to sell."

Self. "What, pray?"

Capt. W. "A half-hogshead cask of pretty ordinary Geneva: *with* a Dutchwoman inside."

Self. "Now, where on earth could you have picked that up?"

Capt. W. (spitting out of window). "In latitude 28°; in a flat calm; off a Dutch East Indiaman. The name I have at home on a bit of paper: you shall have it as warranty with the cask. The captain was drunk, and I traded with the mate. I never miss a chance. The mate said nothing of the woman inside. I believe her to be his captain's wife, preserved for burial ashore. This is painful for me to speak about; for I had the worst of the deal, and such is not my reputation. But I allowed I would sell that cask at a profit if I carried it around for a hundred years."

Self. "What do you ask?"

Capt. W. "Well, I have been inquiring of Mr. ——, your Chief Factor here; and he tells me that your brother, Mr. Obed Lanyon, was with Cook and Vancouver, and knows the coast from Cape Flattery northwards and round by the Aleutians like the palm of his hand. Now it happens I have business up there among the Russian settlements—part trade, part exploring—I needn't say more, for the United States' Government didn't send me to tell secrets. A man like your brother would be money in my pocket all the way: and at the end of the job I would undertake to deliver him and his wife safely at any American port within reason, with money to take them home like princes, and a trifle over. I'm a square man: and if I weren't, you couldn't be in a worse fix than you are."

"I think," said I, "if you do not mind waiting a few minutes, we will trade, Mr. Wills." With this I went on deck and hoisted my private signal for Mr. —— who came alongside in less than half an hour. He was

a practical man, and at once saw the prospect of escape held out by the American's offer, ridiculous as it may seem to those who know little of Chinese law and custom. Indeed one of the magistrates had frankly appealed to Mr. —— to hire a substitute for Margit among the negro women at Macao: and our friend engaged that by spending a few hundred additional dollars he would get the Dutchwoman's corpse accepted as full discharge for the offence, provided that Mrs. Lanyon could be smuggled out of the Canton River. This Captain Wills readily undertook to do. Mr. —— then suggested that his negotiations would be made easier by the disappearance of all implicated in the scuffle—i.e. Mr. Tomlinson and myself, as well as Obed and Mrs. Lanyon. Mr. Findlater, my first officer, could take command and work the *Macartney* home; and Mr. —— engaged to make our case right with the Company, though at the cost to me of the indirect profits which a commander looks to make from a homeward voyage. We discussed this for some while, and in the end agreed to it. Captain Wills, being short-handed, was even generous enough to offer me a small sum for my services in assisting him with the navigation.

To be short, all was arranged. That same night a boat from the *Independence* brought the famous cask of Geneva alongside, and took us four English people in exchange, and by 4 a.m. we were under weigh and heading for the open sea.

The *Independence* steered through the Formosa Strait, across the Eastern Sea, and on the 25th of July entered the bay of Nangasaki under Russian colours, which she thenceforth continued to fly. Like most European captains, our American kept his straight-

forward dealing for certain races only. He produced his trading articles: but the Japanese wanted nothing, and demanded to know what brought him there? He answered that he wanted water and fresh provisions (we had a plenty of both), and to prove it, ordered several butts to be started, and brought empty on deck. This was enough for the hospitable Japanese; who next day brought supplies of hogs, fish, and vegetables, for which they asked no payment; besides four dozen large tubs of water, which Captain Wills emptied on deck, stopping the scuppers, and removing the plugs at night so that the water might not be perceived. On the fourth day we got under weigh again; our deluded friends even going so far in kindness as to tow us out of the bay, and parting from us with cheers and much waving of hats and hands.

From Nangasaki we made for Kamschatka and thence for the Aleutian Islands and the American coast. On his way Captain Wills sedulously prosecuted the business for which his vessel had been chartered by the Russian-American Company, and distributed his cargo of nankeens, silks, tea, sugar, etc., among the Russian settlements dotted among the islands. So far, Obed's services had been in little request: and I, too, had leisure to observe and wonder at a certain remarkable change that had come over Margit—as it seemed to me, from the time of our entering the parallels above 50°. Her usual calm bearing had given way to succeeding fits of restlessness and apathy. At times she would sit dejected for hours together; at others, she would walk the deck without pause, her cloak thrown open to the cold wind, which she seemed to drink like a thirsty creature. One day, the vessel being awk-

wardly becalmed within a mile of an ugly-looking iceberg, her excitement rose to something like a frenzy. The weather being hazy, Obed—who was busy with the captain taking soundings—asked me to run below for his glass; and there I almost fell over Margit, who lay on the cabin floor, her whole body writhing, her hands tightly clenched upon a handkerchief which she had torn to rags. Of course I asked what ailed her, and offered to bring help, medicines, anything. She rose in confusion. "It was a pain at the heart," she said; "nothing more: it would quickly pass: the cold brought it on," she thought. I would oblige her by going away; and, above all, by saying nothing to Obed.

To what extent Obed remarked the change, I cannot tell. He now began to be pretty busy with his soundings and sketches of the coast. We had left Kadjak on the 9th of October, and on the last day of the month were cruising off Queen Charlotte's Island. So far, considering the lateness of the season, we had enjoyed remarkable weather. The natives, too, were friendly beyond expectation. The sight of our vessel brought them off in great numbers and at times we had as many as a hundred canoes about us, the largest holding perhaps a dozen, some armed with muskets, but the most with lances and forks pointed with stags' antlers and a kind of scimitar made of whale-rib. We suffered but two or three persons to board us at a time, and traded with them for dried fish, sea-otters, beaver and reindeer skins. A string of glass beads (blue was the favourite colour) would buy a salmon of 20 pounds weight: but for beaver they would take nothing less valuable than China stuffs.

Obed had warned us against the natives of Queen

Charlotte's Island, as likely to prove stronger and less friendly than any we had encountered. We felt a reasonable anxiety, therefore, when, almost as soon as we sighted the island, a thick fog came up with some wind and a heavy swell from the south and hid the coast completely. This lasted until November 2nd at daybreak, when the weather lifted and we saw land at about eight miles' distance. Unhappily the wind dropped at once, while the motion of the waves continued, and our sails being useless, we found ourselves drifting rapidly shoreward with the set of the current. In the height of our dismay, however, a breeze sprang up from the north-west, and we worked off.

But we were over-hasty in blessing this breeze, which before midnight grew to a violent gale: and for two days we drove before it in much distress—Obed and I taking turns at conning the ship, since Captain Wills had received an awkward blow between the shoulders from the swinging of a loose block, and lay below in considerable pain and occasionally spitting blood, which made us fear some inward hurt. During the night of the 4th, the wind moderated; but the weather turning thick again, we were hardly reassured.

Early on the 6th Captain Wills appeared once more on deck and sent me below to get some sleep. I believe indeed that, had fate allowed, I could have slept round the clock. But at ten that morning a violent shock pitched me clean out of my berth. The *Independence* was aground.

The place of our shipwreck you will find in 47° 66′ N. lat., between Vancouver's Cape Flattery and the mouth of the Columbia River, but nearer to the former. Luckily the *Independence* had run in upon

soft ground and at high water: so that when the tide dropped she still held together, though badly shaken and gaping in all her lower seams. To save her was out of the question. We therefore made the best of our way ashore in the dense fog, taking with us all our guns and the best part of our ammunition, as well as provisions and a quantity of sails and spars for rigging up tents. On no side of us could we see farther than twenty paces. Of the inhabitants of this dreary spot —if indeed it had inhabitants—we knew nothing. So we first of all cleaned and loaded our fire-arms, and then set to work to light a fire and erect a shelter. We had done better, as it turned out, to have divided our company, and told off a fairly strong party to protect the ship. As it was, Captain Wills remained on board with three men to cut away and take down some of the heavier tackling.

We had set up one tent and were at work on the second, when I heard an exclamation from Margit, who stood by the big cauldron, a few paces off, cooking our dinner of salt pork. Looking up I saw a ring of savages all about us on the edge of the fog.

They were brown undersized men, clothed for the most part in dirty blankets and armed with short lances shod with iron, though one or two carried muskets. These last I soon discovered to be toëns, or elders, of the tribe. They stood and observed us with great gravity (indeed in all my acquaintance with them I never knew one to smile) and in absolute silence. I could not tell how many the fog concealed. They made no aggressive movement.

I called to Margit, bidding her leave the cauldron and walk quietly towards us; and she did so. Almost

at once a savage thrust his lance into the pot, drew out our dinner on the end of it, and laid it on the sand. One of the toëns then cut up the pork with his knife and handed the portions round, retaining a large lump for himself.

Seeing this, some of our men were for hostilities: but I restrained them and we made our meal from a barrel of biscuit, eating in silence while the natives chewed away at the pork. The meal over, we fell to work and finished the second tent without opposition, though curiosity drew some of our visitors so near as to hamper the workmen. When thrust aside they showed no resentment, but after a minute drew near again and impeded us as badly as ever.

Towards nightfall the main body drew off—whither, the fog did not reveal: but one or two entered the tents with us, hung around while we supped, and without the least invitation stretched themselves down to sleep. I own that this impudence tried my temper sorely, and Obed—the only one of us who knew some scraps of the language of these Indians—went so far as to remonstrate with them. But if they understood, they gave no sign of understanding: and we resolved to forbear from violence, at least so long as Captain Wills and his three comrades remained away from our main body and exposed to any vengeance these savages might wreak.

And our fears for the Captain were justified about 4 a.m., by a report of fire-arms in the direction of the ship. I sprang to the door and waved a torch, and in a minute or so our comrades came running in through a shower of stones and lances, several of which struck the tents. The natives, it appeared, had attempted

to plunder the ship. At great risk Obed ran out to seek one of the toëns and reason with him: but the mischief happened too quickly. Some of our men caught up their muskets and fired. Our assailants at once broke up and fled; and half a dozen of us charged down to the water's edge, where we saw a score and more with torches, busily setting fire to the ship. They too dispersed before us, leaving two of their number dead on the field and carrying off several wounded. But we came too late to save the *Independence*, which was already ablaze in a dozen different places; nor could we make any effort against the flames, for we knew not how sorely we might be wanted at the tents.

So we returned and spent the rest of the night in great discomfort, the blaze of the ship colouring the fog all around, but showing us nothing. Soon after daybreak the weather lifted a little, and what we saw discouraged us yet further. For, except the beach on which we were encamped, we found the whole coast covered with thick forest to the water's edge; while our boats, in which we might have made shift to escape, had been either fired or taken off by the savages. At 10 a.m., therefore, Captain Wills called a council of war, and informed us that he could think of no better plan than to push on for a harbour (its name, if I mistake not, was Gray's Harbour) lying about seventy miles to the southward, where a ship of the Company was due to call early in the spring. Obed remembered it, and added that the journey might be quickly made, since his map showed no creek or river that promised to impede us, and the Indians were not likely to annoy us while the camp and the remains of the barque afforded any plunder. Accordingly we packed up, and having

destroyed what muskets and weapons we did not want and thrown our spare gunpowder into the sea, shortly after noon began our march through the forest.

We were nineteen persons in all: and each of us carried two muskets, a pistol and some pounds of ammunition, besides his share of the provisions. The only ones more lightly laden were Margit and Captain Wills. The latter, indeed, could with pain manage to walk at all, and so clogged the pace of the party that we made but eight miles before nightfall, when we halted in an open space, set watches, and passed the night with no more discomfort than came from the severe cold.

In the morning we started early and made a good ten miles before noon. The Captain now seemed at the end of his powers and we allowed him an hour's rest while we cleaned our fire-arms. Margit gave no sign of fatigue: but I observed that she walked alone and in silence. Indeed she had scarcely spoken since our shipwreck.

The ground chosen for our halt lay about midway down a stiff slope by which the forest descended to the sea, visible here and there between the stems of the trees below us. Shortly before two o'clock, when we were preparing to start again, a big stone came crashing down among our stores; and, as we scattered in alarm, two or three others followed. Looking up, I caught sight of a couple of Indians on the crest of the slope, and fired off my rifle to frighten them. They desisted at once: but to prevent further annoyance we made for the crest, where the rocky ground made walking difficult, so that we added but another five miles or so before nightfall.

During this night the wind rose, and at length it blew and snowed so hard as to drive us off the ridge. Luckily, however, one of the men discovered a shallow cave in the hillside, and here we huddled and continued all the next day and night, waiting for the storm to abate; which no sooner happened than we were assailed again by a perfect bombardment of big stones. These, however, flew harmlessly over our shelter.

I was dozing at daybreak on the 10th when a seaman named Hogue woke me and called my attention to the Captain. He was stiff and cold, and had died in the night without complaint and, as far as could be learnt, without sound. The rain of stones not being resumed with daylight, we left his body in the cave, and pushed on over the snow in sad and sorry condition: for our provisions now began to run short.

Obed assumed the lead, with the consent of all. Once or twice in the course of the morning I observed him to pause, as if listening. The cause of this became apparent at about one in the afternoon, when I, too, heard the sound of running water: and an hour later we halted on the edge of a broad valley, with a swift stream running through it, black between banks of snow, and on the near bank a few huts and a crowd of three hundred Indians at least.

They had already caught sight of us: so we judged it better to advance, after looking to our arms. We were met by a toën (the same that had cut up the pork) and a chief of taller stature and pleasanter features than we had hitherto happened on in the country. It now appeared that the previous silence of these people had been deliberate: for the toën at once began to talk in a language fairly intelligible to Obed. He proposed

to supply us with boats to cross the river, if we would give up our muskets in payment. This, of course, we refused: but offered him the whole collection of beads and trinkets that we had brought with us in the hope of trafficking for food. After some haggling—to which the handsome chief, Yootramaki, listened with seeming disdain—the toën undertook to let us have the boats; and presently one appeared, paddled by three naked savages. As this would barely hold a dozen passengers, we begged for another, that we might all cross together. The toën complied, and sent a second but much smaller boat. In these we allowed ourselves to be distributed —Obed and I with ten others in the larger, and Margit with five seamen in the smaller.

The boats pushed out into the stream, the larger leading. The current ran deep and swift: and when, about half-way across, the nearest savage ceased paddling, I supposed he did so that the others on the starboard side might more easily bring the bows round to it. Before one could guess his true intention he had stooped and whipped out a plug from the boat's bottom, at the same time calling to his comrades, who leapt up and flung themselves overboard. The next moment he was after them, and the whole party swimming to shore. The current swept us down and carried us so near to a spit of the shore we had left, that the savages, who now pelted us with arrows, succeeded in killing one seaman, and wounding four others: but here most fortunately it set right across for the opposite bank, where we contrived to land just as our boat sank beneath us. Those in the smaller boat, however, fell into our enemy's hands, who clubbed the five seamen on the head, sparing only Margit; and then, supposing

our muskets to be wet and useless, crossed over in a canoe to attack us.

But as Providence would have it, we had four muskets left dry—they being slung round us in bandoliers—and the greater part of our powder unspoiled. We met the foe with a volley which disposed of three and sank the canoe. The survivors swam for it, and I dare say reached shore. A second canoe put off, and from the bows of it the rascally toën (cause of all this misfortune, as we deemed) hailed Obed and offered to let us go in peace and even restore Margit if we would surrender our fire-arms.

I think the coldest heart must have pitied my poor brother then. He paced the bank like a mad creature, silent, directing the most agonised looks at his comrades and at me in particular. We turned our faces aside; for his wishes were madness, yet we were asking him to sacrifice what was dearest to him in the world. In his distraction then he tore off most of his clothes, and piling them in a heap besought the toën to take them for the ransom; and we too stripped and stood all but naked, adding our prayers to his. But the scoundrel, without regard of our offering, spoke to his men, and was paddled away.

I will pass over the hour that followed. We quieted Obed's ravings at length; or rather, they ceased out of pure exhaustion. We were all starving in fact, and the food left in our wallets would not keep a cat alive for another forty-eight hours. Retiring to a clump of firs about a hundred yards back from the river's bank, we scooped a hole in the snow and entrenched ourselves as well as we could for the night. Some of us managed to sleep a little; the others tried to allay the pangs of

hunger by chewing their musket-covers, the sponges on their ramrods, even their boot-soles.

At midnight came my turn for watching. In my weakness I may have dozed, or perhaps was light-headed. At any rate, turning after some time to glance at the sleepers, I missed Obed. An ugly suspicion seized me; I counted the muskets. Two of these were missing. After shaking one of the sleepers by the elbow and bidding him watch, I leaped over our low breast-work and ran towards the river in the track of my brother's footsteps. Almost as I started, a flash and a report of a musket right ahead changed the current of my fears. By the light of the young moon I saw two figures struggling and rolling together on the river's brink. They were Obed and our peculiar enemy, the toën. The body of a dead Indian lad was stretched some ten paces off beside a small canoe which lay moored by the bank.

Our comrades came running up as I flung myself into the struggle, and we quickly secured the toën. I believe Obed would have killed him. "Don't be a fool!" said I; "cannot you see that we now have a hostage for Margit?" I ought at the same time to have begged his pardon for my suspicions. As the reader already knows, Obed had a far keener ear than I, and it had warned him of the canoe's approach. It turned out afterwards that the toën had planned this little reconnoitring expedition on his own account, and on the chance perhaps of filching a musket or two.

We quickly laid our plans; and at daybreak flung my gentleman, bound hand and foot, into his own canoe, which Obed and I paddled into midstream, while our party stood on the bank and watched. The village

opposite seemed deserted: but at Obed's hail an Indian woman ran out of the largest hut, and returning, must have summoned the good-looking chief Yootramaki; who emerged in a minute or so, and came slowly down the bank. By this time several groups of Indians had gathered and stood looking on, in all. perhaps eighty or a hundred people.

Obed pointed to our prisoner and made his demand. I understood him to ask for the immediate ransom of Margit, and a supply of salmon and other provisions to take us on our journey. The chief stood considering for a while; then spoke to a native boy, who ran to the house; and in a minute or so Margit herself appeared, with the native woman who had first taken word of us. She came down the bank, and Yootramaki signed to Obed to address her; which he did.

"Margit," said he, pointing to the toën, "I believe that in this scoundrel here God has provided a way out of all our troubles. We caught him last night, and have brought him along as ransom for you. But stand close to the water and be ready to jump for the boat if they mean treachery. Edom and I will see that you come to no harm."

"My dear husband," she answered, very quiet and slow, "I think you are wasting your time. I am sorry, but I shall not go with you."

Obed turned a dazed look on me, and then, supposing he had not heard aright, began again—

"Stand close by the water, and jump when I give the word. All may depend on your quickness—only be bold, my dear. I will explain after."

"But it is I that must explain. I am not going with you: really I am not."

Obed turned again to me, this time with wide eyes. "God of mercy!" he cried hoarsely; "her troubles have driven her mad!"

Margit heard. "Oh no," she said; "I am not mad. The chief here has taken me: he seems to be the most powerful man in this tribe, and at least he is kind. I should be mad, rather, to wander with you through the forests, and in the end fall into worse hands, or perhaps die of starvation or cold. I do not want to be frozen—again. Go away now, when you have bartered the man there for food. You have been very good to me, but this cannot be helped."

Obed lifted his gun: then lowered it. "Dom," he muttered, "can you shoot her? I cannot!"

I was using all my strength, just then, to keep paddling the canoe against the current. I caught a glimpse of our comrades on the farther bank: and then exactly what happened I know not. Perhaps Margit, having given her answer, turned back towards the house. At any rate, shrilly crying her name, Obed sprang up and discharged his musket. The shot went wide. With a second furious cry he stooped, caught up the helpless toën, and held him high in air. The canoe lurched heavily, and the next instant I was in the water.

I never saw Obed again: and the toën must have gone down like a stone. For me, I struck out for the far shore, but the current swept me down on the sandy spit where we had nearly come to shipwreck, the day before. Several Indians had gathered there. One ran into the water, waist-high, lifting a club. I turned and made a last effort to swim from him, but he flung himself on my back and bore me under.

I recovered to find myself in an Indian hut. Margit had persuaded them to spare me, and I was now, in name at least, a slave in Yootramaki's possession. As a matter of fact, however, I was allowed to do pretty much as I liked; and my employment (absurd as it may sound) for the most part consisted in designing kites and other toys for the natives, who in mind and disposition resemble children rather than grown people —sullen and rather vicious children, I should say.

I believe that Obed's body never came to land. Panic-stricken by his death (I was told), our surviving comrades turned and fled into the woods: and from that hour no more was heard of them. Probably they perished of weariness and hunger; it is at least unlikely in the extreme that they found their way back among civilised men.

Though I accompanied my master and his household northward to the village near Cape Flattery, where his chief residence lay, and remained more than three months in his service, I could never obtain speech with Margit. But I have reason to believe she accepted her new life with absolute contentment. No doubt, though, she found the sight of me an irksome reminder: and one day early in April Yootramaki took me aside and promised me my liberty if I would travel with him as far as the Strait, where an American brig had lately arrived. Of course I accepted his offer with gratitude; and we set forth next day. The captain of this brig (the *Cordelia*) was a Mr. Best, and his business in those parts seemed to consist in trading old American muskets in exchange for furs and dried fish. The Indians have no notion of repairing a gun which has got out of order, and Captain Best actually carried a gunsmith on board,

whose knowledge enabled him to buy up at one place all the guns that wanted repairing, and sell them as new pieces at another.

It only remains to add that the *Cordelia* conveyed me to Valparaiso, whence I shipped for England, reaching the Downs in safety on the 4th of April, 1809.

THE SINGULAR ADVENTURE OF A SMALL FREE-TRADER

[*The events which are to be narrated happened in the spring of* 1803, *and just before the rupture of the Peace of Amiens between our country and France; but were related to my grandfather in* 1841 *by one Yann, or Jean, Riel, a Breton "merchant,"* alias *smuggler—whether or not a descendant of the famous Hervé of that name, I do not know. He chanced to fall ill while visiting some friends in the small Cornish fishing-town, of which my grandfather was the only doctor; and this is one of a number of adventures recounted by him during his convalescence. I take it from my grandfather's MSS., but am not able, at this distance of time, to learn how closely it follows the actual words of the narrator.*

Smuggling in 1841 *was scotched, but certainly not extinct, and the visit of M. Riel to his old customers was, as likely as not, connected with business.—Q.*]

"Item, of the Cognac 25 *degrees above proof, according to sample in the little green flask,* 144 *ankers at* 4 *gallons per anker, at* 5*s.* 6*d. per gallon, the said ankers to be ready slung for horse-carriage."*

"Now may the mischief fly away with these English!" cried my father, to whom my mother was reading the letter aloud. "It costs a man a working day, with

their gallons and sixpences, to find out of how much they mean to rob him at the end of it."

"*Item, 2 ankers of colouring stuff at 4 gallons per anker, price as usual. The place to be as before, under Rope Hauen, east side of Blackhead, unless warned: and a straight run. Come close in, any wind but easterly, and can load up horses alongside. March 24th or 25th will be best, night tides suiting, and no moon. Horses will be there: two fenced lights, pilchard-store and beach, showing S* $\frac{1}{4}$ *E to E S E. Get them in line. Usual pay for freighting, and crew 17l. per man, being a straight run.*"

"And little enough," was my father's comment.

"*Item, 15 little wooden dolls, jointed at the knees and elbows, the same as tante Yvonne used to sell for two sols at Saint Pol de Léon——.*"

"'Fifteen little wooden dolls'! 'Fifteen little woo——'" My father dropped into his chair, and sat speechless, opening and shutting his mouth like a fish.

"It is here in black and white," said my mother. I found the letter, years after, in her kist. It was written, as were all the letters we received from this Cornish venturer, in a woman's hand, small and delicate, with upstrokes like spider's thread; written in French, too, quite easy and careless. My mother held it close to the window. "'Fifteen little wooden dolls,'" she repeated, "'jointed at the knees and elbows.'"

"Well, I've gone to sea with all sorts, from Admiral Brueys upwards; but fifteen little wooden dolls—jointed—at—the—knees!"

"I know the sort," I put in from the hearth, where my mother had set me to watch the *bouillon*. "You can get as many as you like in the very next street, and

at two sols apiece. I will look to that part of the cargo."

"You, for example . . .?"

"Yes, I; since you promised to take me on the very next voyage after I was twelve."

"But that's impossible. This is a straight run, as they call it, and not a mere matter of sinking the crop."

"And next time," I muttered bitterly, "we shall be at war with England again, and then it will be the danger of privateers—always one excuse or another!"

My mother sighed as she looked out of window towards the Isle de Batz. I had been coaxing her half the morning, and she had promised me to say nothing.

Well, the result was that I went. My father's lugger carried twelve hands—I counted myself, of course; and indeed my father did the same when it came to charging for the crew. Still, twelve was not an out-of-the-way number, since in these *chassemarées* one must lower and rehoist the big sails at every fresh tack. As it happened, however, we had a fair wind right across from Roscoff, and made a good landfall of the Dodman at four in the afternoon, just twenty hours after starting. This was a trifle too early for us; so we dowsed sail, to escape notice, and waited for nightfall. As soon as it grew dark, we lowered the two tub-boats we carried—one on davits and the other inboard—and loaded them up and started to pull for shore, leaving two men behind on the lugger. My father steered the first boat, and I the other, keeping close in his wake —and a proud night that was for me! We had three good miles between us and shore; but the boats were

mere shells and pulled light even with the tubs in them. So the men took it easy. I reckon that it was well past midnight before we saw the two lights which the letter had promised.

After this everything went easily. The beach at Rope Hauen is steep-to; and with the light breeze there was hardly a ripple on it. On a rising tide we ran the boats in straight upon the shingle; and in less than a minute the kegs were being hove out. By the light of the lantern on the beach I could see the shifting faces of the crowd, and the troop of horses standing behind, quite quiet, shoulder to shoulder, shaved from forelock to tail, all smooth and shining with grease. I had heard of these Cornish horses, and how closely they were clipped; but these beat all I had ever imagined. I could see no hair on them; and I saw them quite close; for in the hurry each horse, as his turn came, was run out alongside the boat; the man who led him standing knee-deep until the kegs were slung across by the single girth. As soon as this was done, a slap on the rump sent the beast shoreward, and the man scrambled out after him. There was scarcely any talk, and no noise except that caused by the wading of men and horses.

Now all this time I carried my parcel of little dolls in a satchel slung at my shoulder, and was wondering to whom I ought to deliver it. I knew a word or two of English, picked up from the smugglers that used to be common as skate at Roscoff in those days; so I made shift to ask one of the men alongside where the freighter might be. As well as I could make out, he said that the freighter was not on the beach; but he pointed to a tall man standing beside the lantern and gave me to

understand that this was the "deputy." So I slipped over the gunwale and waded ashore towards him.

As I came near, the man moved out of the light, and strolled away into the darkness to the left, I don't know upon what errand. I ran after him, as I thought, but missed him. I stood still to listen. This side of the track was quite deserted, but the noise of the runners behind me, though not loud, was enough to confuse the sound of his footsteps. After a moment, though, I heard a slight scraping of shingle, and ran forward again—plump against the warm body of some living thing.

It was a black mare, standing here close under the cliff, with the kegs ready strapped upon her. I saw the dark forms of other horses behind, and while I patted the mare's shoulder, and she turned her head to sniff and nuzzle me, another horse came up laden from the water and joined the troop behind, no man leading or following. The queer thing about my mare, though, was that her coat had no grease on it like the others, but was close and smooth as satin, and her mane as long as a colt's. She seemed so friendly that I, who had never sat astride a horse in my life, took a sudden desire to try what it felt like. So I walked round, and finding a low rock on the other side, I mounted it and laid my hands on her mane.

On this she backed a foot or two and seemed uneasy, then turned her muzzle and sniffed at my leg. "I suppose," thought I, "a Cornish horse won't understand my language." But I whispered to her to be quiet, and quiet she was at once. I found that the tubs, being slung high, made quite a little cradle between them. "Just a moment," I told myself, "and then

I'll slip off and run back to the boat"; and twining the fingers of my left hand in her mane, I took a spring and landed my small person prone between the two kegs, with no more damage than a barked shin-bone.

And at that very instant I heard a shrill whistle and many sudden cries of alarm; and a noise of shouting and galloping across the beach; and was raising my head to look when the mare rose too, upon her hind-legs, and with the fling of her neck caught me a blow on the nose that made me see stars. And then long jets of fire seemed to mingle with the stars, and I heard the *pop-pop* of pistol-shots and more shouting.

But before this we were off and away—I still flat on the mare's back, with a hand in her mane and my knees wedged against the tubs; away and galloping for the head of the beach, with the whole troop of laden horses pounding at our heels. I could see nothing but the loom of the cliff ahead and the white shingle underfoot; and I thought of nothing but to hold on—and well it was that I did, for else the horses behind had certainly trampled me flat in the darkness. But all the while I heard shouting, louder and louder, and now came more pounding of hoofs alongside, or a little ahead, and a tall man on horseback sprang out of the night, and, cannoning against the mare's shoulder, reached out a hand to catch her by rein, mane, or bridle. I should say that we raced in this way, side by side, for ten seconds or so. I could see the gilt buttons twinkling on his sleeve as he reached past my nose, and finding neither bit nor rein, laid his hand at length right on top of mine. I believe that, till then, the riding-officer—it was he, for the next time I saw a riding-officer I recognised the buttons—had no guess

of anyone's being on the mare's back. But instead of the oath that I expected, he gave a shrill scream, and his arm dropped, for the mare had turned and caught it in her teeth, just above the elbow. The next moment she picked up her stride again, and forged past him. As he dropped back, a bullet or two sang over us, and one went *ping!* into the right-hand keg. But I had no time to be afraid, for the mare's neck rose again and caught me another sad knock on the nose as she heaved herself up the cliff-track, and now I had work to grip the edge of the keg, and twine my left hand tighter in her mane to prevent myself slipping back over her tail, and on to those deadly hoofs. Up we went, the loose stones flying behind us into the bushes right and left. Farther behind I heard the scrambling of many hoofs, but whether of the tub-carriers or the troopers' horses it was not for me to guess. The mare knew, however, for as the slope grew easier, she whinnied and slackened her pace to give them time to come up. This also gave me a chance to shift my seat a bit, for the edges of the kegs were nipping my calves cruelly. The beach below us was like the wicked place in a priest's sermon—black as pitch and full of cursing—and by this time all alive with lanterns; but they showed us nothing. There was no more firing, though, and I saw no lights out at sea, so I hoped my father had managed to push off and make for the lugger.

We were now on a grassy down at the head of the cliff, and my mare, after starting again at a canter which rattled me abominably, passed into an easy gallop. I declare that except for my fears—and now, as the chill of the wind bit me, I began to be horribly afraid—it was like swinging in a hammock to the pitch

of a weatherly ship. I was not in dread of falling, either; for her heels fell so lightly on the turf that they persuaded all fear of broken bones out of the thought of falling; but I *was* in desperate dread of those thundering tub-carriers just behind, who seemed to come down like a black racing wave right on top of us, and to miss us again and again by a foot or less. The *weight* of them on this wide, empty down—that was the nightmare we seemed to be running from.

We passed through an open gate, then another; then out upon hard road for half a mile or so (but I can tell you nothing of the actual distance or the pace), and then through a third gate. All the gates stood open; had been left so on purpose, of course; and the grey granite side-posts were my only milestones throughout the journey. Every mortal thing was strange as mortal thing could be. Here I was, in a foreign land I had never seen in my life, and could not see now; on horseback for the first time in my life; and going the dickens knew whither, at the dickens knew what pace; in much certain and more possible danger; alone, and without speech to explain myself when—as I supposed must happen sooner or later—my runaway fate should shoot me among human folk. And overhead—this seemed the oddest thing of all—shone the very same stars that were used to look in at my bedroom window over Roscoff quay. My mother had told me once that these were millions of miles away, and that people lived in them; and it came into my head as a monstrous queer thing that these people should be keeping me in view, and my own folk so far away and lost to me.

But the stars, too, began to grow faint; and little by little the fields and country took shape around us—

plough, and grass, and plough again; then hard road, and a steep dip into a valley where branches met over the lane and scratched the back of my head as I ducked it; then a moorland rising straight in front, and rounded hills with the daylight on them. And as I saw this, we were dashing over a granite bridge and through a whitewashed street, our hoofs drumming the villagers up from their beds. Faces looked out of windows and were gone, like scraps of a dream. But just beyond the village we passed an old labourer trudging to his work, and he jumped into the hedge and grinned as we went by.

We were climbing the moor now, at a lopping gallop that set the packet of dolls bob-bobbing on my back to a sort of tune. The horses behind were nearly spent, and the sweat had worked their soaped hides into a complete lather. But the mare generalled them all the while; and striking on a cart-track beyond the second rise of the moor, slowed down to a walk, wheeled round and scanned the troop. As they struggled up she whinnied loudly. A whistle answered her far down the lane, and at the sound of it she was off again like a bird.

The track led down into a hollow, some acres broad, like a saucer scooped between two slopes of the moor; and in the middle of it—just low enough to be hidden from the valley beneath—stood a whitewashed farm-house, with a courtlege in front and green-painted gate; and by this gate three persons watched us as we came —a man and two women.

The man by his dress was plainly a farmer; and catching sight of me, he called out something I could not understand, and turned towards the woman beside

him, whom I took to be his wife. But the other woman, who stood some paces away, was a very different person —tall and slight, like a lady; grey-haired, and yet not seeming old; with long white hands and tiny high-heeled shoes, and dressed in black silk, with a lace shawl crossed over her shoulders, and a silver whistle hanging from her neck. She came forward, holding out a handful of sugar, and spoke to the mare, if you'll believe me, in my very own Breton.

"Good Lilith!" said she. "Ah, what a mess for me to groom! See what a coat! Good Lilith!" Then, as Lilith munched the sugar—"Who are you, little boy? I never saw you before. Explain yourself, kindly, little boy."

"My name is Yann," said I; "Yann Riel. I am from Roscoff, and—oh, how tired, madame!"

"He is Breton! He speaks the Breton!" She clapped her hands, drew me down from my seat, and kissed me on both cheeks.

"Yann, you shall sleep now—this instant. Tell me only how you came—a word or two—that I may repeat to the farmer."

So I did my best, and told her about the run, and the dragoons on the beach, and how I came on Lilith's back.

"Wonderful, wonderful! But how came she to allow you?"

"That I know not, madame. But when I spoke to her she was quiet at once."

"In the Breton—you spoke in the Breton? Yes, yes, that explains—*I* taught her. Dear Lilith!" She patted the mare's neck, and broke off to clap her hands again and interpret the tale to the farmer and his wife;

and the farmer growled a bit, and then they all began to laugh.

"He says you are a 'rumgo,' and you had better be put to bed. But the packet on your back—your night-shirt, I suppose? You have managed it all so complete, Yann!" And she laughed merrily.

"It holds fifteen little wooden dolls," said I, "jointed at the knees and elbows; and they cost two sols apiece."

"My little dolls—you clever boy! Oh, you clever little boy!" She kissed me twice again. "Come, and you shall sleep, and then, when you wake, you shall see."

She took me by the hand and hurried me into the house, and upstairs to a great bedroom with a large oaken four-post bed in it, and a narrow wooden bed beside, and a fire lit, and an arm-chair by the hearth. The four-post bed had curtains of green damask, all closely pinned around it, and a green valance. But she went to the little bed, which was hung with pink dimity, and pulled the white sheets out of it and replaced them with others from a great wardrobe sunk in the wall. And while I sat in the chair by the fire, munching a crust of bread and feeling half inclined to cry and more than half inclined to sleep, she left me, and returned with a can of hot water and a vast night-shirt of the farmer's, and bade me good night.

"Be quick and undress, little one." She turned at the door. "The tubs are all in hiding by this time. Good night, Yann."

I believe I slept as soon as my head touched the sweet-smelling pillow; and I must have slept the round of the clock before I opened my eyes, for the room was now bright with candles, and in the arm-chair by the fire sat the Breton lady sewing as if for dear life.

But the wonder of her was that she now wore a short plain dress such as girls wear in the convent schools in Brittany, and her grey hair was tied just like a girl's. One little foot rested on the brass fender, and the firelight played on its silver shoe-buckle.

I coughed, to let her know that I was awake, and she looked across and nodded.

"Almost ten o'clock, Yann, and time for you to rise and have supper. And after supper—are you sorry?—another journey for you. At midnight you start in the gig with Farmer Ellory, who will drive you to the coast, to a town called Fowey, where some friends of his 'in the trade' are starting for Roscoff. In six hours you will be aboard ship again; and in another twenty, perhaps, you will see your mother—and your father too, if he escaped clear away. In little more than a day you will be back in Brittany. But first you must lie quite still, and I will show you something."

"To be sure I will, madame."

"You must not call me that. I am the Demoiselle Héloïse Kéranguin. You know St. Pol de Léon, Yann?"

"Almost as well as my own town, mademoiselle."

"And the Convent of the Grey Nuns, on the road to Morlaix, a little beyond the town?"

It was on my tongue to tell her that fire and soldiery had wiped it even with the ground, during the "Terror." But she interrupted me. Setting down her work-basket, which was heaped high with reels and parti-coloured rags of silk, she pushed a small table over to the big bed and loaded it with candlesticks. There were three candles already alight in the room, but she lit others and set them in line—brass candlesticks,

plated candlesticks, candlesticks of chinaware—fourteen candlesticks in all, and fresh candles in each. Laying a finger on her lip, she stepped to the big bed and unfastened the corking-pins which held the green curtains together. As she pushed the curtains back I lifted myself on an elbow.

It was into a real theatre that I looked. She had transformed the whole level of the bed into a miniature stage, with buildings of cardboard, cleverly painted, and gardens cut out of silk and velvet and laid down, and rose-trees gummed on little sticks, and a fish-pond and brook of looking-glass, with embroidered flowers stuck along their edges, and along the paths (of real sand) a score of little dolls walking, all dressed in the uniform of the Grey Nuns. I declare it was so real, you could almost hear the fountain playing, with its *jet d'eau* of transparent beads strung on an invisible wire.

"But how pretty, mademoiselle!" I cried.

She clasped her hands nervously. "But is it *like*, Yann? It is so long ago that I may have forgotten. Tell me if it is like; or if there is anything wrong. I promise not to be offended."

"It is exactly like, mademoiselle."

"See, here is the Mother Superior; and this is Sœur Gabrielle. I have to make the dresses full and stiff, or they wouldn't stand up. And that, with the blue eyes, is Sœur Hyacinthe. She walks with me—this is I—as she always did. And what do you think? With the fifteen dolls that you have brought I am going to have a real Pardon, and townspeople and fisher-people to stand and worship at the altar of the Virgin, there in the corner. I made it of wax, and stamped the face

with a seal that Charles gave me. He was to have been my husband when I left the school."

"Indeed, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, but the soldiers burnt his house. It was but a week after I left the school, and the Château Sant-Ervoan lay but a mile from my mother's house. He fled to us, wounded; and we carried him to the coast —there was a price on his head, and we, too, had to flee—and escaped over to England. He died on this bed, Yann. Look——"

She lifted a candle, and there on the bed's ledge I read, in gilt lettering, some words I have never forgotten, though it was not until years after that I got a priest to explain them to me. They were "C. De. R. Comes et Ecsul. mdccxciii."

While I stared, she set the candle down again and gently drew the curtains round the bed.

"Rise now and dress, dear child, or your supper will be cold and the farmer impatient. You have done me good. Although I have written the farmer's letters for him, it never seemed to me that I wrote to living people: for all I used to know in Brittany, ten years ago, are dead. For the future I shall write to you."

She turned at the door as she said this, and that was the last I ever saw of her. For when I passed out of the room, dressed and ready for my journey, it was quite dark on the landing, where she met and kissed me. Then she slipped a little packet into my hand.

"For the dolls," she said.

In the kitchen I slipped it out of my pocket and examined it under the table's edge. It was a little silver crucifix, and I have kept it to this day.

THE MYSTERY OF JOSEPH LAQUEDEM

A Jew, unfortunately slain on the sands of Sheba Cove, in the parish of Ruan Lanihale, August 15, 1810*: or so much of it as is hereby related by the Rev. Endymion Trist, B.D., then vicar of that parish, in a letter to a friend.*

My dear J——,—You are right, to be sure, in supposing that I know more than my neighbours in Ruan Lanihale concerning the unfortunate young man, Joseph Laquedem, and more than I care to divulge; in particular concerning his tragical relations with the girl Julia Constantine, or July, as she was commonly called. The vulgar knowledge amounts to little more than this —that Laquedem, a young Hebrew of extraordinary commercial gifts, first came to our parish in 1807 and settled here as managing secretary of a privateering company at Porthlooe; that by his aptitude and daring in this and the illicit trade he amassed a respectable fortune, and at length opened a private bank at Porthlooe and issued his own notes; that on August 15, 1810, a forced "run" which, against his custom, he was personally supervising, miscarried, and he met his death by a carbine-shot on the sands of Sheba Cove; and, lastly, that his body was taken up and conveyed away by the girl Julia Constantine, under the fire of the preventive men.

The story has even in our time received what I may call some fireside embellishments; but these are the facts, and the parish knows little beyond them. I (as you conjecture) know a great deal more; and yet there is a sense in which I know nothing more. You and I, my old friend, have come to an age when men do not care to juggle with the mysteries of another world, but knowing that the time is near when all accounts must be rendered, desire to take stock honestly of what they believe and what they do not. And here lies my difficulty. On the one hand I would not make public an experience which, however honestly set down, might mislead others, and especially the young, into rash and mischievous speculations. On the other, I doubt if it be right to keep total silence and withhold from devout and initiated minds any glimpse of truth, or possible truth, vouchsafed to me. As the Greek said, "Plenty are the thyrsus-bearers, but few the illuminate"; and among these few I may surely count my old friend.

It was in January, 1807—the year of the abominable business of Tilsit—that my churchwarden, the late Mr. Ephraim Pollard, and I, in cleaning the south wall of Lanihale Church for a fresh coat of whitewash, discovered the frescoes and charcoal drawings, as well as the brass plaque of which I sent you a tracing; and I think not above a fortnight later that, on your suggestion, I set to work to decipher and copy out the old churchwardens' accounts. On the Monday after Easter, at about nine o'clock P.M., I was seated in the Vicarage parlour, busily transcribing, with a couple of candles before me, when my housekeeper Frances came in with a visiting-card, and the news that a stranger desired

to speak with me. I took the card and read "Mr. Joseph Laquedem."

"Show the gentleman in," said I.

Now the fact is, I had just then a few guineas in my chest, and you know what a price gold fetched in 1807. I dare say that for twelve months together the most of my parishioners never set eyes on a piece, and any that came along quickly found its way to the Jews. People said that Government was buying up gold, through the Jews, to send to the armies. I know not the degree of truth in this; but I had some five and twenty guineas to dispose of, and had been put into correspondence with a Mr. Isaac Laquedem, a Jew residing by Plymouth Dock, whom I understood to be offering 25*s.* 6*d.* per guinea, or a trifle above the price then current.

I was fingering the card when the door opened again and admitted a young man in a caped overcoat and tall boots bemired high above the ankles. He halted on the threshold and bowed.

"Mr.——?"

"Joseph Laquedem," said he in a pleasant voice.

"I guess your errand," said I, "though it was a Mr. Isaac Laquedem whom I expected.—Your father, perhaps?"

He bowed again, and I left the room to fetch my bag of guineas. "You have had a dirty ride," I began on my return.

"I have walked," he answered, lifting a muddy boot. "I beg you to pardon these."

"What, from Torpoint Ferry? And in this weather? My faith, sir, you must be a famous pedestrian!"

He made no reply to this, but bent over the guineas, fingering them, holding them up to the candle-light,

testing their edges with his thumbnail, and finally poising them one by one on the tip of his forefinger.

"I have a pair of scales," suggested I.

"Thank you, I too have a pair in my pocket. But I do not need them. The guineas are good weight, all but this one, which is possibly a couple of grains short."

"Surely you cannot rely on your hand to tell you that?"

His eyebrows went up as he felt in his pocket and produced a small velvet-lined case containing a pair of scales. He was a decidedly handsome young man, with dark intelligent eyes and a slightly scornful—or shall I say ironical?—smile. I took particular note of the steadiness of his hand as he adjusted the scales and weighed my guinea.

"To be precise," he announced, "1·898, or practically one and nine-tenths short."

"I should have thought," said I, fairly astounded, "a lifetime too little for acquiring such delicacy of sense!"

He seemed to ponder. "I dare say you are right, sir," he answered, and was silent again until the business of payment was concluded. While folding the receipt he added, "I am a connoisseur of coins, sir, and not of their weight alone."

"Antique, as well as modern?"

"Certainly."

"In that case," said I, "you may be able to tell me something about this": and going to my bureau I took out the brass plaque which Mr. Pollard had detached from the planks of the church wall. "To be sure, it scarcely comes within the province of numismatics."

He took the plaque. His brows contracted, and presently he laid it on the table, drew my chair towards him in an absent-minded fashion, and, sitting down, rested his brow on his open palms. I can recall the attitude plainly, and his bent head, and the rain still glistening in the waves of his black hair.

"Where did you find this?" he asked, but without looking up.

I told him. "The engraving upon it is singular. I thought that possibly——"

"Oh, that," said he, "is simplicity itself. An eagle displayed, with two heads, the legs resting on two gates, a crescent between, an imperial crown surmounting—these are the arms of the Greek Empire, the two gates are Rome and Constantinople. The question is, how it came where you found it? It was covered with plaster, you say, and the plaster whitewashed? Did you discover anything near it?"

Upon this I told him of the frescoes and charcoal drawings, and roughly described them.

His fingers began to drum upon the table.

"Have you any documents which might tell us when the wall was first plastered?"

"The parish accounts go back to 1594—here they are: the Registers to 1663 only. I keep them in the vestry. I can find no mention of plastering, but the entries of expenditure on whitewashing occur periodically, the first under the year 1633." I turned the old pages and pointed to the entry "*Ite' paide to George mason for a dayes work about the churche after the Jew had been, and white wassche* i^{s} vj^{d}."

"A Jew? But a Jew had no business in England in those days. I wonder how and why he came?" My

visitor took the old volume and ran his finger down the leaf, then up, then turned back a page. "Perhaps this may explain it," said he. "*Ite' deliuēd Mr. Beuill to make pūision for the companie of a fforeste barke y^t^ came ashoare* iii^s^ iv^d^." He broke off, with a finger on the entry, and rose. "Pray forgive me, sir; I had taken your chair."

"Don't mention it," said I. "Indeed I was about to suggest that you draw it to the fire while Frances brings in some supper."

To be short, although he protested he must push on to the inn at Porthlooe, I persuaded him to stay the night; not so much, I confess, from desire of his company, as in the hope that if I took him to see the frescoes next morning he might help me to elucidate their history.

I remember now that during supper and afterwards my guest allowed me more than my share of the conversation. He made an admirable listener, quick, courteous, adaptable, yet with something in reserve (you may call it a facile tolerance, if you will) which ended by irritating me. Young men should be eager, fervid, *sublimis cupidusque*, as I was before my beard grew stiff. But this young man had the air of a spectator at a play, composing himself to be amused. There was too much wisdom in him and too little emotion. We did not, of course, touch upon any religious question —indeed, of his own opinions on any subject he disclosed extraordinarily little: and yet as I reached my bedroom that night I told myself that here, behind a mask of good manners, was one of those perniciously modern young men who have run through all beliefs by the age of twenty, and settled down to a polite but weary atheism.

I fancy that under the shadow of this suspicion my own manner may have been cold to him next morning. Almost immediately after breakfast we set out for the church. The day was sunny and warm; the atmosphere brilliant after the night's rain. The hedges exhaled a scent of spring. And, as we entered the churchyard, I saw the girl Julia Constantine seated in her favourite angle between the porch and the south wall, threading a chain of daisies.

"What an amazingly handsome girl!" my guest exclaimed.

"Why, yes," said I, "she has her good looks, poor soul!"

"Why 'poor soul'?"

"She is an imbecile, or nearly so," said I, fitting the key in the lock.

We entered the church. And here let me say that, although I furnished you at the time of their discovery with a description of the frescoes and the ruder drawings which overlay them, you can scarcely imagine the grotesque and astonishing *coup d'œil* presented by the two series. To begin with the frescoes, or original series. One, as you know, represented the Crucifixion. The head of the Saviour bore a large crown of gilded thorns, and from the wound in His left side flowed a continuous stream of red gouts of blood, extraordinarily intense in colour (and intensity of colour is no common quality in fresco-painting). At the foot of the cross stood a Roman soldier, with two female figures in dark-coloured drapery a little to the right, and in the background a man clad in a loose dark upper coat, which reached a little below the knees.

The same man reappeared in the second picture,

alone, but carrying a tall staff or hunting spear, and advancing up a road, at the top of which stood a circular building with an arched doorway and, within the doorway, the head of a lion. The jaws of this beast were open and depicted with the same intense red as the Saviour's blood.

Close beside this, but farther to the east, was a large ship, under sail, which from her slanting position appeared to be mounting over a long swell of sea. This vessel had four masts; the two foremost furnished with yards and square sails, the others with lateen-shaped sails, after the Greek fashion; her sides were decorated with six gaily painted bands or streaks, each separately charged with devices—a golden saltire on a green ground, a white crescent on a blue, and so on; and each masthead bore a crown with a flag or streamer fluttering beneath.

Of the frescoes these alone were perfect, but fragments of others were scattered over the wall, and in particular I must mention a group of detached human limbs lying near the ship—a group rendered conspicuous by an isolated right hand and arm drawn on a larger scale than the rest. A gilded circlet adorned the arm, which was flexed at the elbow, the hand horizontally placed, the forefinger extended towards the west in the direction of the picture of the Crucifixion, and the thumb shut within the palm beneath the other three fingers.

So much for the frescoes. A thin coat of plaster had been laid over them to receive the second series, which consisted of the most disgusting and fantastic images, traced in black. One of these drawings represented Satan himself—an erect figure, with hairy paws

clasped in a supplicating posture, thick black horns, and eyes which (for additional horror) the artist had painted red and edged with a circle of white. At his feet crawled the hindmost limb of a peculiarly loathsome monster with claws stuck in the soil. Close by a nun was figured, sitting in a pensive attitude, her cheek resting on the back of her hand, her elbow supported by a hideous dwarf, and at some distance a small house, or prison, with barred windows and a small doorway crossed with heavy bolts.

As I said, this upper series had been but partially scraped away, and as my guest and I stood at a little distance, I leave you to imagine, if you can, the incongruous tableau; the Prince of Darkness almost touching the mourners beside the cross; the sorrowful nun and grinning dwarf side by side with a ship in full sail, which again seemed to be forcing her way into a square and forbidding prison, etc.

Mr. Laquedem conned all this for some while in silence, holding his chin with finger and thumb.

"And it was here you discovered the plaque?" he asked at length.

I pointed to the exact spot.

"H'm!" he mused, "and that ship must be Greek or Levantine by its rig. Compare the crowns on her masts, too, with that on the plaque. . . ." He stepped to the wall and peered into the frescoes. "Now this hand and arm——"

"They belong to me," said a voice immediately behind me, and, turning, I saw that the poor girl had followed us into the church.

The young Jew had turned also. "What do you mean by that?" he asked sharply.

"She means nothing," I began, and made as if to tap my forehead significantly.

"Yes, I do mean something," she persisted. "They belong to me. I remember——"

"What do you remember?"

Her expression, which for a moment had been thoughtful, wavered and changed into a vague foolish smile. "I can't tell . . . something . . . it was sand, I think . . ."

"Who is she?" asked Mr. Laquedem.

"Her name is Julia Constantine. Her parents are dead; an aunt looks after her—a sister of her mother."

He turned and appeared to be studying the frescoes. "Julia Constantine—an odd name," he muttered. "Do you know anything of her parentage?"

"Nothing except that her father was a labourer at Sheba, the manor-farm. The family has belonged to this parish for generations. I believe July is the last of them."

He faced round upon her again. "*Sand*, did you say? That's a strange thing to remember. How does *sand* come into your mind? Think, now."

She cast down her eyes; her fingers plucked at the daisy-chain. After a while she shook her head. "I can't think," she answered, glancing up timidly and pitifully.

"Surely we are wasting time," I suggested. To tell the truth I disapproved of his worrying the poor girl.

He took the daisy-chain from her, looking at me the while with something between a "by your leave" and a challenge. A smile played about the corners of his mouth.

"Let us waste a little more." He held up the chain before her and began to sway it gently to and fro. "Look at it, please, and stretch out your arm; look steadily. Now your name is Julia Constantine, and you say that the arm on the wall belongs to you. Why?"

"Because . . . if you please, sir, because of the mark."

"What mark?"

"The mark on my arm."

This answer seemed to discompose as well as to surprise him. He snatched at her wrist and rolled back her sleeve, somewhat roughly, as I thought. "Look here, sir!" he exclaimed, pointing to a thin red line encircling the flesh of the girl's upper arm, and from that to the arm and armlet in the fresco.

"She has been copying it," said I, "with a string or ribbon, which no doubt she tied too tightly."

"You are mistaken, sir; this is a birthmark. You have had it always?" he asked the girl.

She nodded. Her eyes were fixed on his face with the gaze of one at the same time startled and confiding; and for the moment he too seemed to be startled. But his smile came back as he picked up the daisy-chain and began once more to sway it to and fro before her.

"And when that arm belonged to you, there was sand around you—eh! Tell us, how did the sand come there?"

She was silent, staring at the pendulum-swing of the chain. "Tell us," he repeated in a low coaxing tone.

And in a tone just as low she began, "There was sand . . . red sand . . . it was below me . . . and

something above . . . something like a great tent." She faltered, paused and went on, "There were thousands of people. . . ." She stopped.

"Yes, yes—there were thousands of people on the sand——"

"No, they were not on the sand. There were only two on the sand . . . the rest were around . . . under the tent . . . my arm was out . . . just like this. . . ."

The young man put a hand to his forehead. "Good Lord!" I heard him say, "the amphitheatre!"

"Come, sir," I interrupted, "I think we have had enough of this jugglery."

But the girl's voice went on steadily as if repeating a lesson:

"And then you came——"

"*I!*" His voice rang sharply, and I saw a horror dawn in his eyes, and grow. "I!"

"And then you came," she repeated, and broke off, her mind suddenly at fault. Automatically he began to sway the daisy-chain afresh. "We were on board a ship . . . a funny ship . . . with a great high stern. . . ."

"Is this the same story?" he asked, lowering his voice almost to a whisper; and I could hear his breath going and coming.

"I don't know . . . one minute I see clear, and then it all gets mixed up again . . . we were up there, stretched on deck, near the tiller . . . another ship was chasing us . . . the men began to row, with long sweeps. . . ."

"But the sand," he insisted, "is the sand there?"

"The sand? . . . Yes, I see the sand again . . . we are standing upon it . . . we and the crew . . .

the sea is close behind us . . . some men have hold of me . . . they are trying to pull me away from you. . . . Ah!——"

And I declare to you that with a sob the poor girl dropped on her knees, there in the aisle, and clasped the young man about the ankles, bowing her forehead upon the insteps of his high boots. As for him, I cannot hope to describe his face to you. There was something more in it than wonder—something more than dismay, even—at the success of his unhallowed experiment. It was as though, having prepared himself light-heartedly to witness a play, he was seized and terrified to find himself the principal actor. I never saw ghastlier fear on human cheeks.

"For God's sake, sir," I cried, stamping my foot, "relax your cursed spells! Relax them and leave us! This is a house of prayer."

He put a hand under the girl's chin, and, raising her face, made a pass or two, still with the daisy-chain in his hand. She looked about her, shivered and stood erect. "Where am I?" she asked. "Did I fall? What are you doing with my chain?" She had relapsed into her habitual childishness of look and speech.

I hurried them from the church, resolutely locked the door, and marched up the path without deigning a glance at the young man. But I had not gone fifty yards when he came running after.

"I entreat you, sir, to pardon me. I should have stopped the experiment before. But I was startled—thrown off my balance. I am telling you the truth, sir!"

"Very likely," said I. "The like has happened to other rash meddlers before you."

"I declare to you I had no thought——" he began. But I interrupted him:

"'No thought,' indeed! I bring you here to resolve me, if you can, a curious puzzle in archæology, and you fall to playing devil's pranks upon a half-witted child. 'No thought!'—I believe you, sir."

"And yet," he muttered, "it is an amazing business: the sand—the *velarium*—the outstretched arm and hand—*pollice compresso*—the exact gesture of the gladiatorial shows——"

"Are you telling me, pray, of gladiatorial shows under the Eastern Empire?" I demanded scornfully.

"Certainly not: and that," he mused, "only makes it the more amazing."

"Now, look here," said I, halting in the middle of the road, "I'll hear no more of it. Here is my gate, and there lies the high-road, on to Porthlooe or back to Plymouth, as you please. I wish you good morning, sir; and if it be any consolation to you, you have spoiled my digestion for a week."

I am bound to say the young man took his dismissal with grace. He halted then and there and raised his hat; stood for a moment pondering; and, turning on his heel, walked quickly off towards Porthlooe.

It must have been a week before I learnt casually that he had obtained employment there as secretary to a small company owning the *Lord Nelson* and the *Hand-in-hand* privateers. His success, as you know, was rapid; and naturally in a gossiping parish I heard about it—a little here, a little there—in all a great deal. He had bought the *Providence* schooner; he had acted as freighter for Minards' men in their last run with the *Morning Star*; he had slipped over to Cork

and brought home a Porthlooe prize illegally detained there; he was in London, fighting a salvage case in the Admiralty Court; . . . Within twelve months he was accountant of every trading company in Porthlooe, and agent for receiving the moneys due to the Guernsey merchants. In 1809, as you know, he opened his bank and issued notes of his own. And a year later he acquired two of the best farms in the parish, Tresawl and Killifreeth, and held the fee simple of the harbour and quays.

During the first two years of his prosperity I saw little of the man. We passed each other from time to time in the street of Porthlooe, and he accosted me with a politeness to which, though distrusting him, I felt bound to respond. But he never offered conversation, and our next interview was wholly of my seeking.

One evening towards the close of his second year at Porthlooe, and about the date of his purchase of the *Providence* schooner, I happened to be walking homewards from a visit to a sick parishioner, when at Cove Bottom, by the miller's footbridge, I passed two figures —a man and a woman standing there and conversing in the dusk. I could not help recognising them; and half-way up the hill I came to a sudden resolution and turned back.

"Mr. Laquedem," said I, approaching them, "I put it to you, as a man of education and decent feeling, is this quite honourable?"

"I believe, sir," he answered courteously enough, "I can convince you that it is. But clearly this is neither the time nor the place."

"You must excuse me," I went on, "but I have known Julia since she was a child."

To this he made an extraordinary answer. "No longer?" he asked; and added, with a change of tone, "Had you not forbidden me the vicarage, sir, I might have something to say to you."

"If it concern the girl's spiritual welfare—or yours—I shall be happy to hear it."

"In that case," said he, "I will do myself the pleasure of calling upon you—shall we say to-morrow evening?"

He was as good as his word. At nine o'clock next evening—about the hour of his former visit—Frances ushered him into my parlour. The similarity of circumstance may have suggested to me to draw the comparison; at any rate I observed then for the first time that rapid ageing of his features which afterwards became a matter of common remark. The face was no longer that of the young man who had entered my parlour two years before; already some streaks of grey showed in his black locks, and he seemed even to move wearily.

"I fear you are unwell," said I, offering a chair.

"I have reason to believe," he answered, "that I am dying." And then, as I uttered some expression of dismay and concern, he cut me short. "Oh, there will be no hurry about it! I mean, perhaps, no more than that all men carry about with them the seeds of their mortality—so why not I? But I came to talk of Julia Constantine, not of myself."

"You may guess, Mr. Laquedem, that as her vicar, and having known her and her affliction all her life, I take something of a fatherly interest in the girl."

"And having known her so long, do you not begin to observe some change in her, of late?"

"Why, to be sure," said I, "she seems brighter."

He nodded. "*I* have done that; or rather, love has done it."

"Be careful, sir!" I cried. "Be careful of what you are going to tell me! If you have intended or wrought any harm to that girl, I tell you solemnly——"

But he held up a hand. "Ah, sir, be charitable! I tell you solemnly our love is not of *that* kind. We who have loved, and lost, and sought each other, and loved again through centuries, have out-learned that rougher passion. When she was a princess of Rome and I a Christian Jew led forth to the lions——"

I stood up, grasping the back of my chair and staring. At last I knew. This young man was stark mad.

He read my conviction at once. "I think, sir," he went on, changing his tone, "the learned antiquary to whom, as you told me, you were sending your tracing of the plaque, has by this time replied with some information about it."

Relieved at this change of subject, I answered quietly (while considering how best to get him out of the house), "My friend tells me that a similar design is found in Landulph Church, on the tomb of Theodore Paleologus, who died in 1636."

"Precisely; of Theodore Paleologus, descendant of the Constantines."

I began to grasp his insane meaning. "The race, so far as we know, is extinct," said I.

"The race of the Constantines," said he slowly and composedly, "is never extinct; and while it lasts, the soul of Julia Constantine will come to birth again and know the soul of the Jew, until——"

I waited.

"——Until their love lifts the curse, and the Jew can die."

"This is mere madness," said I, my tongue blurting it out at length.

"I expected you to say no less. Now look you, sir —in a few minutes I leave you, I walk home and spend an hour or two before bedtime in adding figures, balancing accounts; to-morrow I rise and go about my daily business cheerfully, methodically, always successfully. I am the long-headed man, making money because I know how to make it, respected by all, with no trace of madness in me. You, if you meet me to-morrow, shall recognise none. Just now you are forced to believe me mad. Believe it then; but listen while I tell you this:—When Rome was, I was; when Constantinople was, I was. I was that Jew rescued from the lions. It was I who sailed from the Bosphorus in that ship, with Julia beside me; I from whom the Moorish pirates tore her, on the beach beside Tetuan; I who, centuries after, drew those obscene figures on the wall of your church—the devil, the nun, and the barred convent —when Julia, another Julia but the same soul, was denied to me and forced into a nunnery. For the frescoes, too, tell *my* history. *I* was that figure in the dark habit, standing a little back from the cross. Tell me, sir, did you never hear of Joseph Kartophilus, Pilate's porter?"

I saw that I must humour him. "I have heard his legend," said I [1]; "and have understood that in time he became a Christian."

[1] The legend being that as Christ left the Judgment Hall on His way to Calvary, Kartophilus smote Him, saying "Man, go quicker!" and was answered, "I indeed go quickly; but thou shalt tarry till I come again."

He smiled wearily. "He has travelled through many creeds; but he has never travelled beyond Love. And if that love can be purified of all passion such as you suspect, he has not travelled beyond forgiveness. Many times I have known her who shall save me in the end; and now in the end I have found her and shall be able, at length, to die; have found her, and with her all my dead loves, in the body of a girl whom you call half-witted—and shall be able, at length, to die."

And with this he bent over the table, and, resting his face on his arms, sobbed aloud. I let him sob there for a while, and then touched his shoulder gently.

He raised his head. "Ah," said he, in a voice which answered the gentleness of my touch, "you remind me!" And with that he deliberately slipped his coat off his left arm and, rolling up the shirt-sleeve, bared the arm almost to the shoulder. "I want you close," he added with half a smile; for I have to confess that during the process I had backed a couple of paces towards the door. He took up a candle, and held it while I bent and examined the thin red line which ran like a circlet around the flesh of the upper arm just below the apex of the deltoid muscle. When I looked up I met his eyes challenging mine across the flame.

"Mr. Laquedem," I said, "my conviction is that you are possessed and are being misled by a grievous hallucination. At the same time I am not fool enough to deny that the union of flesh and spirit, so passing mysterious in everyday life (when we pause to think of it), may easily hold mysteries deeper yet. The Church Catholic, whose servant I am, has never to my knowledge denied this; yet has providentially made a rule of St. Paul's advice to the Colossians against

intruding into those things which she hath not seen. In the matter of this extraordinary belief of yours I can give you no such comfort as one honest man should offer to another: for I do not share it. But in the more practical matter of your conduct towards July Constantine, it may help you to know that I have accepted your word and propose henceforward to trust you as a gentleman."

"I thank you, sir," he said, as he slipped on his coat. "May I have your hand on that?"

"With pleasure," I answered, and, having shaken hands, conducted him to the door.

From that day the affection between Joseph Laquedem and July Constantine, and their frequent companionship, were open and avowed. Scandal there was, to be sure; but as it blazed up like straw, so it died down. Even the women feared to sharpen their tongues openly on Laquedem, who by this time held the purse of the district, and to offend whom might mean an empty skivet on Saturday night. July, to be sure, was more tempting game; and one day her lover found her in the centre of a knot of women fringed by a dozen children with open mouths and ears. He stepped forward. "Ladies," said he, "the difficulty which vexes you cannot, I feel sure, be altogether good for your small sons and daughters. Let me put an end to it." He bent forward and reverently took July's hand. "My dear, it appears that the depth of my respect for you will not be credited by these ladies unless I offer you marriage. And as I am proud of it, so forgive me if I put it beyond their doubt. Will you marry me?" July, blushing scarlet, covered her face with her hands,

but shook her head. There was no mistaking the gesture: all the women saw it. "Condole with me, ladies!" said Laquedem, lifting his hat and including them in an ironical bow; and placing July's arm in his, escorted her away.

I need not follow the history of their intimacy, of which I saw, indeed, no more than my neighbours. On two points all accounts of it agree: the rapid ageing of the man during this period and the improvement in the poor girl's intellect. Some profess to have remarked an equally vehement heightening of her beauty; but, as my recollection serves me, she had always been a handsome maid; and I set down the transfiguration —if such it was—entirely to the dawn and growth of her reason. To this I can add a curious scrap of evidence. I was walking along the cliff track, one afternoon, between Porthlooe and Lanihale church-town, when, a few yards ahead, I heard a man's voice declaiming in monotone some sentences which I could not catch; and rounding the corner, came upon Laquedem and July. She was seated on a rock; and he, on a patch of turf at her feet, held open a small volume which he laid face downwards as he rose to greet me. I glanced at the back of the book and saw it was a volume of Euripides. I made no comment, however, on this small discovery; and whether he had indeed taught the girl some Greek, or whether she merely listened for the sake of hearing his voice, I am unable to say.

Let me come then to the last scene, of which I was one among many spectators.

On the morning of August 15th, 1810, and just about daybreak, I was awakened by the sound of horses'

hoofs coming down the road beyond the vicarage gate. My ear told me at once that they were many riders and moving at a trot; and a minute later the jingle of metal gave me an inkling of the truth. I hurried to the window and pulled up the blind. Day was breaking on a grey drizzle of fog which drove up from seaward, and through this drizzle I caught sight of the last five or six scarlet plumes of a troop of dragoons jogging down the hill past my bank of laurels.

Now our parish had stood for some weeks in apprehension of a visit from these gentry. The riding-officer, Mr. Luke, had threatened us with them more than once. I knew, moreover, that a run of goods was contemplated: and without questions of mine—it did not become a parish priest in those days to know too much—it had reached my ears that Laquedem was himself in Roscoff bargaining for the freight. But we had all learnt confidence in him by this time—his increasing bodily weakness never seemed to affect his cleverness and resource—and no doubt occurred to me that he would contrive to checkmate this new move of the riding-officer's. Nevertheless, and partly I dare say out of curiosity, to have a good look at the soldiers, I slipped on my clothes and hurried downstairs and across the garden.

My hand was on the gate when I heard footsteps, and July Constantine came running down the hill, her red cloak flapping and her hair powdered with mist.

"Hallo!" said I, "nothing wrong, I hope?"

She turned a white, distraught face to me in the dawn.

"Yes, yes! All is wrong! I saw the soldiers coming —I heard them a mile away, and sent up the rocket from the church-tower. But the lugger stood in—

they *must* have seen!—she stood in, and is right under Sheba Point now—and *he*——"

I whistled. "This is serious. Let us run out towards the point; we—you, I mean—may be in time to warn them yet."

So we set off running together. The morning breeze had a cold edge on it, but already the sun had begun to wrestle with the bank of sea-fog. While we hurried along the cliffs the shoreward fringe of it was ripped and rolled back like a tent-cloth, and through the rent I saw a broad patch of the Cove below; the sands (for the tide was at low ebb) shining like silver; the dragoons with their greatcoats thrown back from their scarlet breasts and their accoutrements flashing against the level rays. Seaward, the lugger loomed through the weather; but there was a crowd of men and black boats—half a score of them—by the water's edge, and it was clear to me at once that a forced run had been at least attempted.

I had pulled up, panting, on the verge of the cliff, when July caught me by the arm.

"*The sand!*"

She pointed; and well I remember the gesture—the very gesture of the hand in the fresco—the forefinger extended, the thumb shut within the palm. "*The sand* . . . he told me . . ."

Her eyes were wide and fixed. She spoke, not excitedly at all, but rather as one musing, much as she had answered Laquedem on the morning when he waved the daisy-chain before her.

I heard an order shouted, high up the beach, and the dragoons came charging down across the sand. There was a scuffle close by the water's edge; then,

as the soldiers broke through the mob of free-traders and wheeled their horses round, fetlock deep in the tide, I saw a figure break from the crowd and run, but presently check himself and walk composedly towards the cliff up which climbed the footpath leading to Porthlooe. And above the hubbub of oaths and shouting, I heard a voice crying distinctly, "Run, man! 'Tis after thee they are! *Man, go faster!*"

Even then, had he gained the cliff-track, he might have escaped; for up there no horseman could follow. But as a trooper came galloping in pursuit, he turned deliberately. There was no defiance in his attitude; of that I am sure. What followed must have been mere blundering ferocity. I saw a jet of smoke, heard the sharp crack of a fire-arm, and Joseph Laquedem flung up his arms and pitched forward at full length on the sand.

The report woke the girl as with the stab of a knife. Her cry—it pierces through my dreams at times—rang back with the echoes from the rocks, and before they ceased she was half-way down the cliffside, springing as surely as a goat, and, where she found no foothold, clutching the grass, the rooted samphires and sea pinks, and sliding. While my head swam with the sight of it, she was running across the sands, was kneeling beside the body, had risen, and was staggering under the weight of it down to the water's edge.

"Stop her!" shouted Luke, the riding-officer. "We must have the man! Dead or alive, we must have'n!"

She gained the nearest boat, the free-traders forming up around her, and hustling the dragoons. It was old Solomon Tweedy's boat, and he, prudent man, had

taken advantage of the skirmish to ease her off, so that a push would set her afloat. He asserts that as July came up to him she never uttered a word, but the look on her face said "Push me off," and though he was at that moment meditating his own escape, he obeyed and pushed the boat off "like a mazed man." I may add that he spent three months in Bodmin Jail for it.

She dropped with her burden against the stern sheets, but leapt up instantly and had the oars between the thole-pins almost as the boat floated. She pulled a dozen strokes, and hoisted the mainsail, pulled a hundred or so, sprang forward and ran up the jib. All this while the preventive men were straining to get off two boats in pursuit; but, as you may guess, the free-traders did nothing to help and a great deal to impede. And first the crews tumbled in too hurriedly, and had to climb out again (looking very foolish) and push afresh, and then one of the boats had mysteriously lost her plug and sank in half a fathom of water. July had gained a full hundred yards' offing before the pursuit began in earnest, and this meant a good deal. Once clear of the point the small cutter could defy their rowing and reach away to the eastward with the wind just behind her beam. The riding-officer saw this, and ordered his men to fire. They assert, and we must believe, that their object was merely to disable the boat by cutting up her canvas.

Their first desultory volley did no damage. I stood there, high on the cliff, and watched the boat, making a spy-glass of my hands. She had fetched in close under the point, and gone about on the port tack—the next would clear—when the first shot struck her, cutting a hole through her jib, and I expected the wind to

rip the sail up immediately; yet it stood. The breeze being dead on-shore, the little boat heeled towards us, her mainsail hiding the steerswoman.

It was a minute later, perhaps, that I began to suspect that July was hit, for she allowed the jib to shake and seemed to be running right up into the wind. The stern swung round and I strained my eyes to catch a glimpse of her. At that moment a third volley rattled out, a bullet shore through the peak halliards, and the mainsail came down with a run. It was all over.

The preventive men cheered and pulled with a will. I saw them run alongside, clamber into the cutter, and lift the fallen sail.

And that was all. There was no one on board, alive or dead. Whilst the canvas hid her, in the swift two minutes between the boat's putting about and her running up into the wind, July Constantine must have lifted her lover's body overboard and followed it to the bottom of the sea. There is no other explanation; and of the bond that knit these two together there is, when I ask myself candidly, no explanation at all, unless I give more credence than I have any wish to give to the wild tale which Joseph Laquedem told me. I have told you the facts, my friend, and leave them to your judgment.

PRISONERS OF WAR

A REPORTED TALE OF ARDEVORA

You've heard tell, I dare say, about Landlord Cummins and Billy Bosistow, and the great jealousy there was between them. No? Well, I see you going about Ardevora, and making a study of us; and I know you can read, because I've seen you doing it down to the Institute. But sometimes, when I ask you a simple little question like that, you force me to wonder what you've been doing with yourself all these years. Why, it got into the Law Courts!

I know all about it, being related to them both after a fashion, as you might say. Landlord Cummins—he that used to keep the "Welcome Home"—married an aunt of mine on my mother's side, and that's part of the story. The boys used to call him "Calves-in-front," because of his legs being put on in an unusual manner, which made him walk slow all his days, and that's another part of the story. And Billy Bosistow, or Uncle Billy, was my father's father's stepson. You needn't take any trouble to get that clear in your mind, because our family never owned him after he came home from the French war prisons and took up with his drinking habits; and that comes into the story, too.

As it happens, the occasion that took their quarrel into the Law Courts is one of the first things I can

remember. It was in the year 'twenty-five. Landlord Cummins, by dint of marrying a woman with means (that was my aunt), and walking the paths of repute for eleven years with his funny-shaped calves, got himself elected Mayor of the Borough. You may suppose it was a proud day for him. In those times the borough used to pay the mayor a hundred pounds a year to keep up appearances, and my mother had persuaded my father to hire a window for Election Day opposite the Town Hall, so that she might have the satisfaction of seeing so near a relative in his robes of dignity.

Well, there in the window we were gathered on that July forenoon (for the mayors in those back-a-long days weren't chosen in November as they are now), and the sun—it was a bright day—slanting high down our side of the street, and my mother holding me tight as we leaned out, for I was just rising five, and extraordinary heavy in the head. And out upon the steps of the Town Hall stepped Landlord Cummins, Mayor, with the Town Crier and maces before him, and his robes hanging handsomely about his calves, and his beaver hat and all the rest of the paraphernalia, prepared to march to church.

While he stood there, bowing to a score of people, and looking as big as bull's beef, who should step out from the pavement under us but Uncle Billy Bosistow! He was a ragged old scarecrow, turned a bit grey and lean with iniquitous living, but not more than half-drunk; and he stepped into the middle of the roadway and cut a low reverence to his worship, flinging out his leg like a dancing-master. And says he, in a high cackle, very solemn but mocking:

"I salute thee, O Mayor! Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before thy God."

"Put that dam fool in the stocks!" cried his worship, very red in the gills, and speaking vicious. And Uncle Billy was collared and marched off between two constables, while the procession formed up to lead the new Mayor to church.

Well, that, as it happened, wasn't a lucky start-off for Mr. Cummins's year of office. For no sooner was Billy let out of the stocks than off he went to Lawyer Mennear, who was a young man then just set up in practice, and as keen for a job as a huer for pilchards; and between them they patched up an action for false imprisonment—damages claimed, one hundred pounds.

The case came on at Bodmin, and the Mayor was cast in damages, twenty-five pounds. He paid, of course, though with a very long face. But Billy's revenge didn't stop here. Instead of putting the money by, the old varmint laid it out in the best way he could to annoy his enemy. And the way he contrived it was this. Every free Saturday he'd put a sovereign in his pocket, and start the round of the public-houses —always beginning with Cummins's own house, the "Welcome Home." Cummins, you see, couldn't refuse to serve him: the law wouldn't allow it. So he'd pull out a brand new sovereign and slap it on the counter and eye it. "Ah!" he'd say, "it was a dear friend gave me that there coin. His heart's in the right place, which is more'n can be said for his calves. Twopennyworth of gin, please, your Worship." The Mayor's dignity wouldn't let him serve it, so, the first day, he called his wife down. Mrs. Cummins began by trying argument. "William," she said, "the Lord

knows you wouldn't have this money if there was justice in England. But got it you have, and now be a sensible man and put it by for a rainy day." "Mrs. Mayor," answers Billy, slow and vicious, "if there was any chance of presentin' you with a silver cradle, I'd save it up and subscribe." After that there was nothing more to say. It hurt the poor soul terrible, and she went upstairs again and cried as she went. Billy sat on and soaked, and the Mayor, across the counter, sat and watched his condition, quiet-like, till the time came for refusing any more liquor and turning him out. When that happened the old sinner would gather up his change and make off for another public. And the end was that he'd be up before the Mayor on Monday morning, charged with drunkenness. No use to fine him; he wouldn't pay, but went to jail instead. "Ten years was I in prison," he'd say, addressing the bench, "along with his Worship there. I don't know what 'twould appear to him who came back and got the "Welcome Home"; but *I* didn't, and ten days don't frighten *me*."

Landlord Cummins would listen to this, looking as unnatural as a blue china cat in a thunderstorm. He fairly hated these appearances of Billy, and they spoiled his term of office, I do believe. But all the same he turned out a very passable Mayor. The townsfolk respected him so highly, I've heard my mother say, that they made him Ex-Mayor the year following.

Now you'll be wanting to know what made these two men hate each other, for friends they had been, as two men ought to be who had been taken prisoners together and spent ten years in captivity to the French, and come home aboard the same ship like brothers.

The bigger the love the bigger the hate, and no difficulty to guess there was a woman in the case. So there was; but the way she came between them was curious, for all that.

First of all, you must know, that up to the year 'three Abe Cummins and Bill Bosistow hadn't known what it is to differ or to miss meeting each other every day. They went to school together, and then to the fishing, and afterwards they sailed together with the free-traders over to Mount's Bay, and good seamen the both, though not a bit alike in looks and ways. Abe, the elder by a year, was a bit slow and heavy on his pins; given to reading, too, though he seemed to take it up for peace and quietness more than for any show he made of his learning. Bill was smarter altogether and better looking; a bit boastful, after the manner of young chaps. He could read too, but never did much at it, though I've heard that on Saturday nights he was fond of ranting verses—stuff about drink and such like—out of a book of Robert Burns's poetry he'd borrowed off Abe.

You'd hardly have thought two young fellows so different in every way could have hit it off as they did. But these were like two figures in a puzzle-block; their very differences seemed to make them fit. There never was such a pair since David and Jonathan, and I believe 'twas partly this that kept them from running after girls. So far as I can see, the most of the lads begin at seventeen; but these two held off sweethearting right along until Christmas of the year 'three when they came home from Porthleven to spend a fortnight at Ardevora, and they both fell in love with Selina Johns.

Selina Johns wasn't but just husband-high; turned

sixteen and her hair only put up a week before, she having begged her mother's leave to twist it in plaits for the Christmas courants. And Abe and Billy each knew the other's secret almost before he knew his own, for each, as you may say, kept his heart like a window and looked into his friend's window first.

And what they did was to have it out like good fellows, and agree to wait a couple of years, unless any third party should interfere. In two years' time, they agreed, Selina Johns would be wise enough to choose —and then let the best man win! No bad blood afterwards, and meanwhile no more talk than necessary —they shook hands upon that. That January, being tired of the free-trade, they shipped together on board a coaster for the Thames, and re-shipped for the voyage homeward on board the brig *Hand and Glove*, of London.

The *Hand and Glove*, Uriah Wilcox, master, was bound for Devonport with a cargo of copper and flour for the dockyard there, and came to anchor in the Downs on March 24th to join convoy under the *Spider* gun-brig. On the 25th (a Sunday) it blew hard from north to west, and she let go sheet anchor. Next day the weather moderated a bit, and, heaving up her sheet anchor, she rode to her best bower. On the Tuesday, the wind having fallen light, the master took off a new longboat from Deal. There was some hitch in delivering her, and she was scarcely brought alongside by five the next morning when the Commodore signalled to get under weigh.

By reason of this delay, the *Hand and Glove* was taken unawares, and started well astern of the fleet, which numbered over twenty sail of merchantmen;

and, being a sluggard in anything short of half a gale, she made up precious little way in the light E.N.E. breeze.

Soon after seven that evening, Beachy Head bearing N.W. by W. four miles and a half, Abe Cummins on the look-out forward spied a lugger coming towards shore upon a wind. She crossed well ahead of the *Hand and Glove*, and close—as it looked—under the stern of an East Indiaman which was then busy reefing topsails before night. For a while Abe lost sight of her under the dark of the land; but by and by the wheelman took a glance over his shoulder, and there she was, creeping up close astern. His call fetched up Captain Wilcox, who ran aft and hailed, but got no reply. And so she came on, until, sheering close up under the *Hand and Glove's* port quarter, she was able to heave a grapnel on board and throw twenty well-armed Johnnies into the old brig. The Englishmen—seven in all, and taken unprepared—were soon driven below and shut down—four in the cabin, two in the steerage, and one in the forecastle, this last being Abe Cummins. After a while the sentry over the hatchway called for him to come up and show where the leading ropes were, which he did at the point of a cutlass. And precious soon the Johnnies had altered the brig's course and stood away for the coast of France, the lugger keeping her company all night.

Early next morning the two vessels were close off Dieppe Harbour; and there, when the tide suited, they were taken inside, and the prisoners put ashore at nightfall and lodged for three days in a filthy round tower, swarming with vermin. On April 1—Easter Sunday, I've heard it was—they were told to get ready

for marching, and handed over, making twenty-five in all, with the crews of two other vessels, both brigs —the *Lisbon Packet*, bound from London to Falmouth with a general cargo, and the *Margaret*, letter of marque of London, bound from Zante, laden with currants— to a lieutenant and a guard of foot soldiers. Not a man of them knew where they were bound. They set out through a main pretty country, where the wheat stood near-abouts knee-high, but the roads were heavy after the spring rains. Each man had seven shillings in his pocket, given him at parting by the captain of his vessel—the three captains had been left behind at Dieppe—and on they trudged for just a fortnight on an allowance of one pound of brown bread and twopence-halfpenny per man per day; the bread served out regular and the money, so to say, when they could get it. Mostly they came to a town for their night's halt, and as often as not the townsfolk drummed them to jail with what we call the "Rogue's March," but in France I believe it's "Honours of War," or something that sounds politer than 'tis. But there were times when they had to put up at a farmhouse by the road, and then the poor chaps slept on straw for a treat.

Well, on the last day of the fortnight they reached their journey's end—a great fortress on a rock standing right over the river, with a town lying around the foot of the rock, and a smaller town, reached by a bridge of boats, on the far side of the river. I can't call to mind the name of the river, but the towns were called Jivvy —Great and Little Jivvy.[1] The prison stood at the very top of the rock, on the edge of a cliff that dropped a clean three hundred feet to the river: not at all a pretty

[1] Givet in the Ardennes. The river, of course, is the Meuse.

place to get clear of, and none so cheerful to live in on a day's allowance of one pound of brown bread, half a pound of bullock's offal, three-halfpence in money (paid weekly, and the most of it deducted for prison repairs, if you please!), and now and then a noggin of peas for a treat. They found half a dozen ships' companies already there, and enjoying themselves on this diet; the crew of the *Minerva* frigate, run ashore off Cherbourg; the crew of the *Hussar*, wrecked outside Brest; and—so queerly things fall out in this world—among them a parcel of poor fellows from Ardevora, taken on board the privateer *Recovery* of this port.

To keep to my story, though—which is about Abe Cummins and Billy Bosistow. It was just in these unhappy conditions that the difference in the two men came out. Abe took his downfall very quiet from the first. He had managed to keep a book in his pocket—a book of voyages it was—and carry it with him all the way from Dieppe, and it really didn't seem to matter to him that he was shut up, so long as he could sit in a corner and read about other folks travelling. In the second year of their captivity an English clergyman, a Mr. Wolfe, came to Jivvy, and got leave from the Commandant to fit up part of the prison granary for a place of worship and preach to the prisoners. It had a good effect on the men in general, and Abe in particular turned very religious. Mr. Wolfe took a fancy to him, and lent him an old book on "Navigation"—Hamilton Moore's; and over that Abe would sit by the hour, with his room-mates drunk and fighting round him, and copy out tables and work out sums. All his money went in pen and ink instead of the liquor which the jailers smuggled in.

Billy Bosistow was a very different pair of shoes. Although no drinker by habit, he fretted and wore himself down at times to a lowness of spirits in which nothing seemed to serve him but drinking, and fierce drinking. On his better days he was everybody's favourite; but when the mood fell on him he grew teasy as a bear with a sore head, and fit to set his right hand quarrelling with his left. Then came the drinking fit, and he'd wake out of that like a man dazed, sitting in a corner and brooding for days together. What he brooded on, of course, was means of escape. At first, like every other prisoner in Jivvy, he had kept himself cheerful with hopes of exchange, but it seemed the folks home in Ardevora had given up trying for a release, or else letters never reached them. And yet they must have known something of the case their poor kinsmen were in, for in the second year the Commandant sent for Abe and Billy, and informed them that, by the kindness of a young English lady, a Miss Selina Johns, their allowance was increased by two sols a day. He showed them no letter, but the increase was paid regularly for eight months; after which a new Commandant came, and it ceased. They could never find out if the supply ceased, or into whose pocket it went if it came.

From that time Bosistow had two things to brood upon—escape and Selina. But confinement is the ruination of some natures, and as year after year went by and his wits broke themselves on a stone wall, he grew into a very different man from the handy lad the Johnnies had taken prisoner. One thing he never gave up, and that was his pluck; and he had plenty of use for it when, after seven years, his chance came.

His first contrivance was to change names with an old American in the depot. It so happened that the captain of a French privateer had applied to the prison for a crew of foreigners to man his ship, then lying at Morlaix. The trick, by oiling the jailer's palm, was managed easily enough, and away Bosistow was marched with twenty comrades of all nations. But at the first stage some recruiting-officers stopped them, insisting that they were Irish and not Americans, and must be enlisted to serve with Bonaparty's army in Spain. The prisoners to a man refused to hear of it, and the end was they were marched back to prison in disgrace, and, to cap everything, had their English allowance stopped on pretence that they had been in the French service.

Yet this brought him a second chance, for being now declared an Irishman he managed to get himself locked up with the Irish, who had their quarters on the handier side of the prison; and that same night broke out of window with two other fellows, got over the prison wall, and hid in the woods beyond. But on the second day a party of wood-rangers attacked them with guns and captured them; and back they went, and were condemned to six years in irons.

This, as it turned out, didn't amount to much; for, while they were waiting to be marched off to the galleys, their jailer came with news that a son was born to the Emperor, and they were pardoned in honour of it. But instead of putting them back in their old quarters, he fixed them up for a fortnight in a room by themselves, being fearful that such bad characters would contaminate the other prisoners. This room was an upstairs one in a building on the edge of the ramparts, and

after a few nights they broke through the ceiling into an empty chamber, which had a window looking on the roof. With a rope made of their bedclothes they lowered themselves clean over the ramparts on to the edge of the precipice over the river; and along this they passed—having no daylight to make them giddy—and took their way northwards across the fields.

Well, it doesn't come into my tale to tell you what they went through. Bosistow wrote out an account of it years after, and you shall read it for yourself. At one place they had to cross a river, and Billy being, like the most of our fishermen, no swimmer, his mates stuck him on a hurdle and pushed him over while they swam behind. They steered by the Pole Star (for, you understand, they could only travel by night) and also by a fine comet which they guessed to be in the north-west quarter.

You see the difference between these two fellows, and how little Providence made of it. Back in Jivvy, Abe Cummins was staring at this same comet out of his prison windows, and doing his sums and thinking of Selina Johns. And here was Bosistow following it up for freedom—with the upshot that he made the coast and was taken like a lamb in the attempt to hire a passage, and marched in irons from one jail to another, and then clean back the whole length of France, pretty well to the Mediterranean Sea. And then he was shut up in a prison on the very top of the Alps [1] and twice as far from home as he had been in Jivvy. That's a moral against folks in a hurry if ever there was one.

Well, let alone that while he was here he received a free pardon from the Emperor, which his persecutors

[1] Probably Briançon in the Hautes Alpes.

took no notice of, he broke out of prison again, and was caught and brought back half-starving. And 'twasn't till Christmas of the year 'thirteen that orders came to march him right away north again, with all the prisoners, to a place in the Netherlands; and no sooner arrived than away to go again three hundred and fifty miles west-sou'-west for Tours, on the Loire River. I've figured it out on the map, and even that is enough to make a man feel sore in his feet. But what made Bosistow glad at the time, and vicious after, was that on his way he fell in with a draft of prisoners, and, among them, with Abe Cummins, who, so to say, had reached the same place by walking a tenth part of the distance. And, what's more, though a man couldn't very well get sleek in Jivvy, Abe had kept his bones filled out somehow, and knew enough navigation by this time to set a course to the Channel Fleet. 'Deed, that's what he began talking about on the first day's journey he and Billy trudged together after their meeting. And he began it after a spell of silence by asking, quiet like, "Have you been happening to think much about Selina Johns this last year or two?"

"Most every day," answered Billy.

"So have I," said Abe, and seemed to be pondering to himself. "She'll be a woman growed by this time," he went on.

"Turnin' twenty-seven," Billy agreed.

"That's of it," said Abe. "I've been thinking about her, constant."

"Well, look'ee here," spoke up Billy, "our little agreement holds, don't it?—that is, if we ever get out of this here mess, and Selina hasn't gone and taken a husband. Play fair, leave it to the maid, and let the

best man win; that's what we shook hands over. If that holds, seemin' to me the rest can wait."

"True, true," says Abe; but after a bit he asks rather sly-like: "And s'posin' you're the lucky one, how do'ee reckon you're going to maintain her?"

"Why, on seaman's wages, I suppose; or else at the shoe-mending. I learnt a little of that trade in Jivvy, as you d'know."

"Well," says Abe, "I was reckonin' to set up school and teach navigation. Back in Ardevora I can make between seventy and eighty pounds a year at that game easy."

Bosistow scratched his head. "You've been making the most of your time. Now I've been busy in my way, too, but seemin' to me the only trade I've learned is prison-breakin'. Not much to keep a wife on, as you say. Still, a bargain 's a bargain."

"Oh, sutt'nly," says Abe; "that is if your conscience allows it."

"I reckon I'll risk that," answers Billy, and no more passed.

From Tours the prisoners tramped south-east again, to a town called Riou, in the middle of France, and reached it in a snowstorm on March the 1st. Here they were billeted for five weeks or so, and here, one night, they were waked up and told that Bonaparty had gone scat, and they must come forth and dance with the townspeople in honour of it. You may be sure they heeled and toed it that night, and no girl satisfied unless she had an Englishman for a partner. But the next day it all turned out to be lies, and off they were marched again. To be short, 'twasn't till the end of April that they came to the river opposite Bordeaux, and were

taken in charge by English red-coats, who told them they were free men. On the 28th of that month Abe and Billy, with forty others, were put on board a sloop and dropped down the river to the *Dartmouth* frigate, from which they were drafted on to the *Lord Wellington*, and again on to the *Suffolk* transport. And on May the 4th the *Suffolk*, with six other transports, having about fifteen hundred released prisoners on board, weighed anchor under convoy for Plymouth before a fine breeze, S.E. by S.

On Monday, May the 9th, at half-past two in the afternoon—the wind still steady in the same quarter, and blowing fresh—the *Suffolk* sighted land, making out St. Michael's Mount; and fetching up to Mousehole Island, the captain hailed a mackerel boat to come alongside and take ashore some officers with dispatches.

Abe Cummins and Billy Bosistow were both on deck, you may be sure, watching the boat as the fishermen brought her alongside. Not a word had been said between them on the matter that lay closest to their minds, but while they waited Billy fetched a look at the boat and another at Abe. "The best man wins," he said to himself, and edged away towards the ladder.

The breeze, as I said, was a fresh one, with a sea in the bay that kept the *Suffolk* rolling like a porpoise. A heavier lurch than ordinary sent her main channels grinding down on the mackerel boat's gunwale, smashing her upper strakes and springing her mizzen mast as she recovered herself.

"Be dashed," said one of the officers, "if I trust myself in a boat that'll go down under us between this and land!"

The rest seemed to be of his mind, too. But Billy, being quick as well as eager, saw in a moment that the damaged strakes would be to windward on the reach into Mousehole, and well out of harm's way in the wind then blowing, and also that her mainsail alone would do the job easy. So just as she fell off and her crew ran aft to get the mizzen lug stowed he took a run past the officer and jumped aboard, with two fellows close on his heels—one a Penzance fellow whose name I've forgot, and the t'other a chap from Ludgvan, Harry Cornish by name. I reckon the sight of the old shores just made them mazed as sheep, and like sheep they followed his lead. The officers ran to stop any more from copying such foolishness; and if they hadn't, I believe the boat would have been swamped there and then. As 'twas, she re-hoisted her big lug and away-to-go for Mousehole, the three passengers sitting down to leeward with their sterns in and out of the water to help keep her damaged side above mischief.

So on Mousehole Quay these three stepped ashore, and the first man to shake hands with them was Capen Josiah Penny, of the *Perseverance* trading ketch, then lying snug in Mousehole Harbour. Being a hearty man he invited them down to his cabin to take a drop of rum. The Penzance fellow, having only a short way to trudge, said "No, thank'ee," and started for home with a small crowd after him. But Bosistow and Cornish agreed 'twould be more neighbourly to accept, and, to tell the truth, they didn't quite know how to behave with so many eyes upon them. Cornish had on a soldier's red jacket with white facings, and a pair of blue trousers out at the knees, while Bosistow's trousers were of white cloth, and he carried a japanned

knapsack at the back of his red shirt: and with a white-painted straw hat apiece, you may guess they felt themselves looking like two figures of fun.

So down they went to the *Perseverance's* cabin, and Capen Penny mixed them a stiff glass of rum and called them fine fellows, and mixed them two more glasses while they talked; and when the time came to say "So long," Billy was quite sure he didn't care for appearances one snap of his fingers.

They linked arms on the quay, where they found a crowd waiting for them, and many with questions to ask about absent friends, so that from Mousehole to Penzance it was a regular procession. And then they had to go to the hotel and tell the whole story over again, and answer a thousand and one questions about Penzance boys imprisoned at Jivvy. And all this meant more rum, of course.

It was seven in the evening, and day closing in, before they took the road again. Billy had fallen into a boastful mood, and felt his heart so warm towards Cornish that nothing would do but they must tramp it together so far as Nancledrea, which was a goodish bit out of Cornish's road to Ludgvan. By the time they reached Nancledrea Billy was shedding tears and begging Cornish to come along to Ardevora. "I'll make a man of 'ee there," he promised: "I will sure 'nough!" But Cornish weighed the offer, and decided that his mother at Ludgvan would be going to bed before long. So coming to a house with red blinds and lights within they determined to have a drink before parting.

In the tap-room they found a dozen fellows or so drinking their beer and smoking solemn, and an upstanding woman in a black gown attending on them.

"Hallo!" says one of the men looking up, "What's this? Geezy-dancers [1]?"

"I'll soon tell 'ee about Geezy-dancers," says Billy. "Here, Missus—a pot of ale all round, and let 'em drink to two Cornish boys home from festerin' in French war prisons, while they've a'been diggin' taties!"

There was no resisting a sociable offer like this, and in two two's, as you might say, Billy was boasting ahead for all he was worth, and the company with their mouths open—all but the landlady, who was opening her eyes instead, and wider and wider.

"There isn' none present that remembers me, I dare say. My name's Bosistow—Billy Bosistow—from Ardevora parish. And back there I'm going this very night, and why? you ask. I ben't one of your taty-diggin' slowheads—*I* ben't. I've broke out of prison three times, and now——" He nodded at the company, whose faces by this time he couldn't very well pick out of a heap—"do any of 'ee know a maid there called Selina Johns? Because if so I warn 'ee of her. 'Why?' says you. Because that's the maid I'm goin' to marry, and I'm off to Ardevora to do it straight. Another pot of beer, please, missus."

"You've had a plenty, sir, seemin' to me," answered up the landlady, while the company tittered.

"And is this the way"—Billy stood up very dignified—"is this the way to welcome home a man who bled for his country? Is this your gratitude to a man who's spent ten o' the best years of his life in slavery while you've been diggin' taties?" I can't tell you why potatoes ran so much in the poor fellow's head; but they did, and he seemed to see the hoeing of them

[1] Performers in a Christmas Play.

almost in the light of a personal injury. He spat on the floor. "And as for you, madam, these here boots of mine have tramped thousands of miles, and I shake off their dust upon you," he says.

"I wish you'd confine yourself to that, with your dirty habits!" the landlady answered up again, but Billy marched out with great dignity, which was only spoiled by his mistaking the shadow across the doorway for a raised step. He didn't forget to slam the door after him; but he did forget to take leave of Harry Cornish, who had walked so far out of his way in pure friendliness.

For the first mile or so, what with his anger and the fresh air, Billy had a to-do to keep his pins and fix his mind on the road. But by and by his brain cleared a bit, and when he reached the hill over Ardevora, and saw the lights of the town below him, his mood changed, and he sat down on the turf of the slope with tears in his eyes.

"There you be," said he, talking to the lights, "and here be I; and somewheres down amongst you is the dear maid I've come to marry. Not much welcome for me in Ardevora, I b'law, though I do love every stone of her streets. But there's one there that didn' forget me in my captivity, and won't despise me in these here rags. I wish I'd seen Abe's face when I jumped aboard the boat. Poor old Abe!—but all's fair in love and war, I reckon. He can't be here till to-morrow at earliest, so let's have a pipe o' baccy on it."

He lit up and sucked away at his pipe, still considering the lights in the valley. Somehow they put him in mind of Abe, and how in the old days he and Abe used to come on them shining just so on their way home on Saturday nights from Bessie's Cove.

Poor old mate!—first of all he pictured Abe's chapfallen face, and chuckled; then he began to wonder if Abe would call it fair play. But all was fair in love and war: he kept saying this over to himself, and then lit another pipe to think it out.

Well, he couldn't; and so, after a third pipe, he pulled an old French cloak out of his knapsack and wrapped himself in it and huddled himself to sleep there on the slope of the hillside.

When he woke up the sun was shining and the smoke coming up towards him from the chimneys, and all about him the larks a-dinging just as they'd carried on every fine morning since he'd left Ardevora. And somehow, though he had dropped asleep in a puzzle of mind, he woke up with not a doubt to trouble him. He hunted out a crust from his knapsack and made his breakfast, and then he lit his pipe again and turned back towards Penzance. He was going to play fair.

On he went in this frame of mind, feeling like a man almost too virtuous to go to church, until by and by he came in sight of Nancledrea and the inn he'd left in such a hurry over night. And who should be sitting in the porchway, and looking into the bottom of a pint pot, but Abe Cummins!

"Why, however on earth did you come here?" asked Billy.

"Cap'en landed us between four and five this morning," said Abe.

"Well," said Billy, "I'm right glad to meet you, anyway, for—tell 'ee the truth—you're the very man I was looking for."

"Really?" says Abe, like one interested.

"You and no other. I don't mind telling 'ee I've

been through a fire of temptation. You know why I jumped into that boat; it vexed you a bit, I dare say. And strictly speakin', mind you"—Billy took his friend by the button-hole—"strictly speakin' I'd the right on my side. 'Let the best man win' was our agreement. But you needn' to fret yourself: *I* ben't the man to take an advantage of an old friend, fair though it be. Man, I ha'n't been to Ardevora—I turned back. So finish your beer and come'st along with me, and we'll walk down to Selina Johns together and ask her which of us she'll choose, fair and square."

Abe set down his mug and looked up, studying the signboard over the door.

"Well," says he, "'tis a real relief to my mind to know you've played so fair. For man and boy, Bill, I always thought it of you."

"Yes, indeed," says Billy, "man and boy, it always was my motto."

"But as consarnin' Selina Johns," Abe went on, "there ain't no such woman."

"You don't tell me she's dead!"

"No; 'tis her first husband that's dead. She's Selina Widlake now."

"How long have 'ee knowed that?"

"Maybe an hour, maybe only three-quarters. Her name's Selina Widlake, and she owns this here public. What's more, her name isn't going to be Selina Widlake, but Selina Cummins. We've fixed it up, and she's to leave Nancledrea and take the "Welcome Home" over to Ardevora."

Billy Bosistow took a turn across the road, and, coming back, stuck his hands in his pockets and stared up at the sign overhead.

"Well! And I, that was too honourable——" he began.

"So you was," agreed Abe, pulling out his pipe. "You can't think what a comfort that is to me. But, as it turns out, 'twouldn't have made no difference. For she see'd you last evenin', and she was tellin' me just now that prison hadn't improved you. In fact she didn't like either your looks or your behaviour."

I've heard that he was just in time to pop inside and bolt the door after him. And now you know why Billy Bosistow and Abe Cummins could never bear the sight of each other from that day. But there! you can't be first and last too, as the saying is.

A TOWN'S MEMORY

A PENDANT TO THE FOREGOING

THE returned Emigrant was not one of those who sometimes creep back to Tregarrick and scan the folk wistfully and the names over the shops till they bethink themselves of stepping up the hill to take a look at the cemetery, and there find all they sought. This man stood under the archway of the "Pack-horse" Inn (by A. Walters), with his soft hat tilted over his nose, a cigar in his mouth, hands in his trouser-pockets, and legs a-straddle, and smoked and eyed the passers-by with a twinkle of humour.

He knew them all again, or nearly all. He had quitted Tregarrick for the Cape at the age of fifteen, under the wing of a cousin from the Mining District; had made money out there, and meant to return to make more; and was home just now on a holiday, with gold in his pocket and the merest trace of silver in his hair. He watched the people passing, and it all seemed very queer to him and amusing.

They were one and all acting and behaving just as they had used to act and behave. Some were a trifle greyer, perhaps, and others stooped a bit; but they went about their business in the old fashion, and their occupations had not changed. It was just as if he had wound up a clockwork toy before leaving England, and had returned after many years to find it still working. Here came old Dymond, the postman, with the usual midday delivery, light as ever, and the well-remembered

dot-and-go-one gait. The maids who came out to take the letters were different; in one of them the Emigrant recognised a little girl who had once sat facing him in the Wesleyan day-school; but the bells that fetched them out were those on which he had sounded runaway peals in former days, and with his eyes shut he could have sworn to old Dymond's double knock. The cart that rattled its load of empty cans up the street belonged to Nicholas Retallack ("Old Nick"), the milkman, and that was Retallack beside it, returning from his morning round. The Emigrant took the cigar from his mouth and blew a lazy cloud. But for Retallack he might never have seen South Africa or known Johannesburg. Retallack had caught him surreptitiously milking the Alderney into a battered straw hat, and had threatened a summons. There had been a previous summons with a conviction, and the Mayor had hinted at the Reformatory, so the Emigrant had been packed off. And here he was, back again; and here was Retallack trudging around, the same as ever.

In the window across the road a saddler sat cutting out a strap, and reminding the Emigrant of a certain First of April when he had ventured in and inquired for half a pint of strap-oil. It might almost be the same strap, as it certainly was the same saddler.

Down at the street corner, by the clock, a couple of Town Councillors stood chatting. While the Emigrant looked there came round the corner a ruck of boys from school chivvying and shouting after an ungainly man, who turned twice and threatened them with a stick. The Town Councillors did not interfere, and the rabble passed bawling by the "Pack-horse." Long before it came the Emigrant had recognised the ungainly man.

It was Dicky Loony, the town butt. He had chivvied the imbecile a hundred times in just the same fashion, yelling "Black Cat!" after him as these young imps were yelling—though why "Black Cat" neither he nor the imps could have told. But Dicky had always resented it as he resented it now, wheeling round, shaking his stick, and sputtering maledictions. A stone or two flew harmlessly by. The Emigrant did not interfere.

As yet no one had recognised him. He had arrived the night before, and taken a room at the "Packhorse," nobody asking his name; had sat after supper in a corner of the smoking-room and listened to the gosisp there, saying nothing.

"Who's he travellin' for?" somebody had asked of Abel Walters, the landlord. "He ain't a commercial. He han't got the trunks, only a kit-bag. By the soft hat he wears I should say *a* agent in advance. Likely we'll have a circus before long."

His father and mother were dead these ten years. He had sent home money to pay the funeral expenses and buy a substantial headstone. But he had not been up to the cemetery yet. He was not a sentimental man. Still, he had expected his return to make some little stir in Tregarrick, and now a shade of disappointment began to creep over his humour.

He flung away the end of his cigar and strolled up the sunny pavement to a sweet-shop where he had once bought ha'porths of liquorice and cinnamon-rock. The legend, "E. Hosking, Maker of Cheesecakes to Queen Victoria," still decorated the window. He entered and demanded a pound of best "fairing," smiling at the magnificence of the order. Mrs. Hosking —her white mob-cap and apron clean as ever—offered

him a macaroon for luck, and weighed out the sweets. Her hand shook more than of old.

"You don't remember me, Mrs. Hosking?"

"What is it you say? You must speak a little louder, please, I'm deaf."

"You don't remember me?"

"No, I don't," she said composedly. "I'm gone terrible blind this last year or two."

The Emigrant paid for his sweets and walked out. He had bought them with a purpose, and now bent his steps down Market Street. At the foot of the hill he paused before a row of whitewashed cottages. A green fence ran along their front, and a pebbled path; and here he found a stout, matronly woman bent over a wash-tub.

"Does Mrs. Best live here?" he asked.

The woman withdrew about a dozen pins from her mouth and answered all in one breath:

"She isn't called Best any longer; she married agen five year ago; second husbing, he died too; she doesn' live here any more."

With this she stuck the pins very deliberately, one by one, in the bosom of her print gown, and plunged her hands into the wash-tub again.

The Emigrant stood nonplussed for a moment and scratched the back of his head, tilting his soft hat still farther forward on his nose.

"She used to be very fond of me when I was a boy," he said lamely.

"Yes?" The tone seemed to ask what business that could be of hers.

"She came as nurse to my mother when I was born. I suppose that made her take a fancy to me."

"Ah, no doubt," replied the woman vaguely, and added, while she soaped a long black stocking, "she did a lot o' that, one time and another."

"She had a little girl of her own before I left Tregarrick," the Emigrant persisted, not because she appeared interested—she did not, at all—but with some vague hope of making himself appear a little less trivial. "Lizzie she called her. I suppose you don't know what has become of the old woman?"

"Well, considerin' that I'm her daughter Elizabeth" —she lengthened the name with an implied reproof— "I reckon I ought to know."

The Emigrant's hand sought and crushed the big packet of sweets well into his pocket. He flushed scarlet. At the same time he could hardly keep back a smile at his absurd mistake. To be here with lollipops for a woman of thirty and more!

"You haven't any little ones of your own?"

"No, I haven't. Why?"

"Oh, well; only a question. My name is Peter Jago —Pete, I used to be called."

"Yes?"

He took notice that she had said nothing of her mother's whereabouts; and concluded, rightly, that the old woman must be in the workhouse.

"Well, I'm sorry," he said. "I thought I might be able to do something for her."

The woman became attentive at last.

"Any small trifle you might think o' leavin' with me, sir, it should duly reach her. She've failed a lot, lately."

"Thank you; I'll think it over. Good day."

He strolled back to the "Pack-horse" and ate his dinner. Abel Walters, coming in after with a pint of

port to his order, found the Emigrant with a great packet of sugared almonds and angelica spread open beside his cheese.

"I suppose, sir," said Mr. Walters, eyeing the heap, "you've travelled a great deal in foreign parts."

Two days passed. The Emigrant visited the cemetery, inspected his parents' tombstone, and found about it a number of tombstones belonging to people whose faces he had not hitherto missed. But after his experiment upon Elizabeth Best he had not declared himself a second time. Indeed, his humour by this had turned sour, and his mind was made up that, if no one recognised him spontaneously, he would leave his native town as quietly as he had come—would go back without revealing himself to a soul. It would be unfair to say that he felt aggrieved; but he certainly dismissed a project, with which he had often played in South Africa, of erecting a public drinking-fountain on Mount Folly, as the citizens of Tregarrick call the slope in front of the County Assize Hall.

The third day was Sunday, and he went to church in the morning. The Vicar who preached was a stranger to him; but in the sidesman who came down the aisle afterwards with the offertory-plate he recognised one Billy Smithers, who had been a crony of his some twenty years ago; who had, in fact, helped him more than once to milk Retallack's Alderney. He felt in his pocket and dropped a sovereign into the plate. The sidesman halted and rubbed his chin.

"Han't you made a mistake?" he asked in a stage whisper.

The Emigrant waved his hand in rather a lordly

manner, and William Smithers, sidesman, proceeded down the aisle, wondering, but not suspecting.

The Vicar recited the prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth, and the Emigrant joined the crowd trooping out by the western door.

But in the press just outside the door two hands suddenly seized his right hand and shook it violently. He turned and faced—Dicky Loony.

"Me know, eh? Pete—Mas'r Pete!" The idiot bent over his hand and mumbled it with his wry mouth, then shook it again, peering up in his face. "Eh? Pete—Pete. Yes. All right!"

The Emigrant looked down on this poor creature at whom he had flung scores of stones, but never a kind word. And the idiot ran on:

"Dicky, eh?"—tapping his chest. "You know—Dicky. Pete—Pete, eh?"—and he made the gesture of one flinging a stone. "Often, ha, ha! *So* high." He spread his hand, palm downward, about five feet from the ground.

"Well I'm blest!" said the Emigrant softly. They stood now on the green together, a little apart from the crowd.

"*So* high, eh? Li'l boy, eh? Fling—me know!" He took the emigrant's hand again and shook it, smiling and looking him straight in the eyes with innocent gaiety. "These boys—no good; no good now. Pete, *he* fling *so*. Li'l boy—quite li'l boy. Me know, eh? Dicky know!"

"Well," repeated the Emigrant; "I'm blest, but this is funny!"

THE LADY OF THE RED ADMIRALS

"All day within the dreamy house
The doors upon their hinges creak'd,
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked,
Or from the crevice peer'd about.
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without."—MARIANA.

My eyes had been occupied with the grey chimneys below, among the Spanish chestnuts, at the very moment when I slipped on the northern face of Skirrid and twisted my ankle. This indeed explains the accident; and the accident explains why my interest in the house with the grey chimneys suddenly became a personal one. Five miles separated me from my inn in Aber town. But the white smoke of a goods-train went crawling across the green and cultivated plain at my feet; and I knew, though I carried no map, that somewhere under the slope to my left must hide the country station of Llanfihangel. To reach it I must pass the house, and there, no doubt, would happen on someone to set me on the shortest way.

So I picked up my walking-stick and hobbled down the hillside, albeit with pain. Where the descent eased a little I found and followed a foot-track, which in time turned into a sunk road scored deep with old cart-ruts, and so brought me to a desolate farmstead, slowly

dropping to ruin there in the perpetual shadow of the mountain. The slates that had fallen from the roof of byre and stable lay buried already under the growth of nettle and mallow and wild parsnip; and the yard-wall was down in a dozen places. I shuffled through one of these gaps, and almost at once found myself face to face with a park-fence of split oak—in yet worse repair, if that were possible. It stretched away right and left with promise of a noble circumference; but no hand had repaired it for at least twenty years. I counted no less than seven breaches through which a man of common size might step without squeezing; availed myself of the nearest; and having with difficulty dragged my disabled foot up the ha-ha slope beyond, took breath at the top and looked about me.

The edge of the ha-ha stood but fifty paces back from an avenue of the most magnificent Spanish chestnuts I have ever seen in my life. A few of them were withering from the top; and under these many dead boughs lay as they had fallen, in grass that obliterated almost all trace of the broad carriage-road. But nine out of ten stood hale and stout, and apparently good for centuries to come. Northward, the grey façade of the house glimmered and closed their green prospective, and towards it I now made my way.

But, I must own, this avenue daunted me, as a frame altogether too lordly for a mere limping pedestrian. And therefore I was relieved, as I drew near, to catch the sound of voices behind the shrubberies on my right hand. This determined me to take the house in flank, and I diverged and pushed my way between the laurels in search of the speakers.

"A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!

Lobelia, how many horses has your father in stable? Red, white, or grey?"

"One, Miss Wilhelmina; an' that's old Sentry-go, and father says *he'll* have to go to the knacker's before another winter."

"Then he shall carry me there on his back: with rings on my fingers and bells on my toes—

She rode unto the knacker's yard,
And tirlèd at the pin:
Right glad were then the cat's-meat men
To let that lady in!

—especially, Lobelia, when she alighted and sat upon the ground and began to tell them sad stories of the death of kings. But they cut off Sentry-go's head and nailed it over the gate. So he died, and she very imprudently married the master knacker, who had heard she was an heiress in her own right, and wanted to decorate his coat-of-arms with an escutcheon of pretence; and besides, his doctor had recommended a complete change"—

"Law, miss, how you *do* run on!"

The young lady who had given utterance to this amazing rigmarole stood at the top of a terrace flight (much cracked and broken) between two leaden statuettes (headless)—a willowy child in a large-brimmed hat, with a riding-switch in one hand and the other holding up an old tartan shawl, which she had pinned about her to imitate a horse-woman's habit. As she paced to and fro between the leaden statuettes—

pedes vestis defluxit ad imos
Et vera incessu patuit dea,

—and I noted almost at once that two or three butter-

flies ("red admirals" they were) floated and circled about her in the sunlight. A child of commoner make, and perhaps a year older, dressed in a buff print frock and pink sunbonnet, looked up at her from the foot of the steps. The faces of both were averted, and I stood there for at least a minute on the verge of the laurels, unobserved, considering the picture they made, and the ruinous Jacobean house that formed its background.

Never was house more eloquent of desolation. Unpainted shutters, cracking in the heat, blocked one half of its windows. Weather-stains ran down the slates from the lantern on the main roof. The lantern over the stable had lost its vane, and the stable-clock its minute-hand. The very nails had dropped out of the gable wall, and the wistaria and Gloire de Dijons they should have supported trailed down in tangles, like curtains. Grass choked the rain-pipes, and moss dappled the gravel walk. In the border at my feet someone had attempted a clearance of the weeds; and here lay his hoe, matted with bindweed and ring-streaked with the silvery tracks of snails.

"Very well, Lobelia. We will be sensible housemaid and cook, and talk of business. We came out, I believe, to cut a cabbage-leaf to make an apple-pie"—

At this point happening to turn her head she caught sight of me, and stopped with a slight, embarrassed laugh. I raised my hat.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but no strangers are admitted here."

"I beg your pardon"—I began; and with that, as I shifted my walking-stick, my foolish ankle gave way, and plump I sat in the very middle of the bindweed.

"You are ill?" She came quickly towards me, but

halted a pace or two off. "You look as if you were going to faint."

"I'll try not to," said I. "The fact is, I have just twisted my ankle on the side of Skirrid, and I wished to be told the shortest way to the station."

"I don't believe you can walk; and"—she hesitated a second, then went on defiantly—"we have no carriage to take you."

"I should not think of putting you to any such trouble."

"Also, if you want to reach Aber, there is no train for the next two hours. You must come in and rest."

"But really"—

"I am mistress here. I am Wilhelmina Van der Knoope."

Being by this time on my feet again, I bowed and introduced myself by name. She nodded. The child had a thoughtful face—thoughtful beyond her years—and delicately shaped rather than pretty.

"Lobelia, run in and tell the Admirals that a gentleman has called, with my permission."

Having dismissed the handmaiden, she observed me in silence for a few moments while she unpinned her tartan riding-skirt. Its removal disclosed, not—as I had expected—a short frock, but one of quite womanly length; and she carried it with the air of a grown woman.

"You must make allowances, please. I think," she mused, "yes, I really think you will be able to help. But you must not be surprised, mind. Can you walk alone, or will you lean a hand on my shoulder?"

I could walk alone. Of what she meant I had of course no inkling; but I saw she was as anxious now for me to come indoors as she had been prompt at first to warn me off the premises. So I hobbled after her

towards the house. At the steps by the side-door she turned and gave me a hand. We passed across a stone-flagged hall and through a carpetless corridor, which brought us to the foot of the grand staircase: and a magnificent staircase it was, ornate with twisted balusters and hung with fine pictures, mostly by old Dutch masters. But no carpet covered the broad steps, and the pictures were perishing in their frames for lack of varnish. I had halted to stare up at a big Hondecoeter that hung in the sunlight over the first short flight of stairs—an elaborate "Parliament of Fowls"—when the girl turned the handle of a door to my right and entered.

"Uncle Peter, here is the gentleman who has called to see you."

As I crossed the threshold I heard a chair pushed back, and a very old gentleman rose to welcome me at the far end of the cool and shadowy room; a tall white-haired figure in a loose suit of holland. He did not advance, but held out a hand tentatively, as if uncertain from what direction I was advancing. Almost at once I saw that he was stone-blind.

"But where is Uncle Melchior?" exclaimed Wilhelmina.

"I believe he is working at accounts," the old gentleman answered—addressing himself to vacancy, for she had already run from the room. He shook hands courteously and motioned me to find a chair, while he resumed his seat beside a little table heaped with letters, or rather with bundles of letters neatly tied and docketed. His right hand rested on these bundles, and his fingers tapped upon them idly for a minute before he spoke again.

"You are a friend of Fritz's? of my grandson?"

"I have not the pleasure of knowing him, sir. Your

niece's introduction leaves me to explain that I am just a wayfarer who had the misfortune to twist an ankle, an hour ago, on Skirrid, and crawled here to ask his way."

His face fell. "I was hoping that you brought news of Fritz. But you are welcome, sir, to rest your foot here; and I ask your pardon for not perceiving your misfortune. I am blind. But Wilhelmina—my grand-niece—will attend to your wants."

"She is a young lady of very large heart," said I.

He appeared to consider for a while. "She is with me daily, but I have not seen her since she was a small child, and I always picture her as a child. To you, no doubt, she is almost a woman grown?"

"In feeling, I should say, decidedly more woman than child; and in manner."

"You please me by saying so. She is to marry Fritz, and I wish that to happen before I die."

Receiving no answer to this—for, of course, I had nothing to say—he startled me with a sudden question. "You disapprove of cousins marrying?"

I could only murmur that a great deal depended on circumstances.

"And there are circumstances in this case. Besides, they are second cousins only. And they both look forward to it. I am not one to force their inclinations, you understand—though, of course, they know it to be my wish—the wish of both of us, I may say; for Melchior is at one with me in this. Wilhelmina accepts her future—speaks of it, indeed, with gaiety. And as for Fritz—though they have not seen each other since he was a mere boy and she an infant—as for Fritz, he writes—but you shall judge from his last letter."

He felt among the packets and selected one. "I

know one from t'other by the knots," he explained. "I am an old seaman! Now here is his last, written from the South Pacific station. He sends his love to 'Mina, and jokes about her being husband-high: 'but she must grow, if we are to do credit to the Van der Knoopes at the altar.' It seems that he is something below the traditional height of our family; but a thorough seaman, for all his modesty. There, sir: you will find the passage on the fourth page, near the top."

I took the letter; and there, to be sure, read the words the old Admiral had quoted. But it struck me that Fritz der Knoope used a very ladylike handwriting, and of a sort not usually taught on H.M.S. *Britannia*.

"In two years' time the lad will be home, all being well. And then, of course, we shall see."

"Of what rank is he?"

"At present a second lieutenant. His age is but twenty-one. The Van der Knoopes have all followed the sea, as the portraits in this house will tell you. Ay, and we have fought against England in our time. As late as 1672, Adrian Van der Knoope commanded a ship under De Ruyter when he outgeneralled the English in Southwold Bay. But since 1688 our swords have been at the service of our adopted country; and she has used them, sir."

I am afraid I was not listening. My chair faced the window, and as I glanced at the letter in my hands enough light filtered through the transparent "foreign" paper to throw up the watermark, and it bore the name of an English firm.

This small discovery, quite unwillingly made, gave me a sudden sense of shame, as though I had been playing some dishonourable trick. I was hastily folding

up the paper, to return it, when the door opened and Wilhelmina came in, with her uncle Melchior.

She seemed to divine in an instant what had happened; threw a swift glance at the blind Admiral, and almost as swiftly took the letter from my hand and restored it to the packet. The next moment, with perfect coolness she was introducing me to her uncle Melchior.

Melchior Van der Knoope was perhaps ten years younger than his brother, and carried his tall figure buttoned up tightly in an old-fashioned frockcoat: a mummy of a man, with a fixed air of mild bewilderment and a trick of running his left hand through his white hair—due, no doubt, to everlasting difficulty with the family accounts. He shook hands as ceremoniously as his brother.

"We have been talking of Fritz," said old Peter.

"Oh yes—of Fritz. To be sure." Melchior answered him vaguely, and looked at me with a puzzled smile. There was silence in the room till his brother spoke again. "I have been showing Mr. —— Fritz's last letter."

"Fritz writes entertainingly," murmured Melchior, and seemed to cast about for another word, but repeated, "—entertainingly. If the state of your ankle permits, sir, you will perhaps take an interest in our pictures. I shall be happy to show them to you."

And so, with the occasional support of Melchior's arm, I began a tour of the house. The pictures indeed were a sufficient reward—seascapes by Willem Van der Velde, flower-portraits by Willem Van Aslet, tavern-scenes by Adrian Van Ostade; a notable Cuyp; a small Gerard Dow of peculiar richness; portraits—the Burgomaster Albert Van der Knoope, by Thomas de Keyser—the Admiral Nicholas, by Kneller—the Admiral

Peter (grand-uncle of the blind Admiral), by Romney. . . . My guide seemed as honestly proud of them as insensible of their condition, which was with every one of them deplorable. By and by, in the library we came upon a modern portrait of a rosy-faced boy in a blue suit, who held (strange combination!) a large ribstone pippin in one hand and a cricket bat in the other—a picture altogether of such glaring demerit that I wondered for a moment why it hung so conspicuously over the fire-place, while worthier paintings were elbowed into obscure corners. Then with a sudden inkling I glanced at Uncle Melchior. He nodded gravely.

"That is Fritz."

I pulled out my watch. "I believe," I said, "it must be time for me to bid your brother good-bye."

"You need be in no hurry," said Miss Wilhelmina's voice behind me. "The last train to Aber has gone at least ten minutes since. You must dine and sleep with us to-night."

I awoke next morning between sheets of sweet-smelling linen in a carved four-post bed, across the head-board of which ran the motto "STEMMATA QVID FACIVNT" in faded letters of gilt. If the appearance of the room, with its tattered hangings and rickety furniture, had counted for anything, my dreams should certainly have been haunted. But, as a matter of fact, I never slept better. Possibly the lightness of the dinner (cooked by the small handmaid Lobelia) had something to do with it; possibly, too, the infectious somnolence of the two Admirals, who spoke but little during the meal, and nodded, without attempt at dissimulation, over the dessert. At any rate, shortly after nine o'clock—when Miss Wilhelmina brought

out a heavy Church Service, and Uncle Melchior read the lesson and collect for the day and a few prayers, including the one "For those at Sea"—I had felt quite ready for bed. And now, thanks to a cold compress, my ankle had mended considerably. I descended to breakfast in very cheerful mind, and found Miss Wilhelmina alone at the table.

"Uncle Peter," she explained, "rarely comes down before mid-day; and Uncle Melchior breakfasts in his room. He is busy with the accounts."

"So early?"

She smiled rather sadly. "They take a deal of disentangling."

She asked how my ankle did. When I told her, and added that I must catch an early train back to Aber, she merely said, "I will walk to the station with you, if I may."

And so at ten o'clock—after I had bidden farewell to Uncle Melchior, who wore the air of one interrupted in a long sum of compound addition—we set forth. I knew the child had something on her mind, and waited. Once, by a ruinous fountain where a stone Triton blew patiently at a conch-shell plugged with turf, she paused and dug at the mortared joints of the basin with the point of her sunshade; and I thought the confidence was coming. But it was by the tumble-down gate at the end of the chestnut avenue that she turned and faced me.

"I knew you yesterday at once," she said. "You write novels."

"I wish," said I feebly, "the public were as quick at discovering me."

"Somebody printed an 'interview' with you in ——'s Magazine a month or two ago."

"There was not the slightest resemblance."

"Please don't be silly. There was a photograph."

"Ah, to be sure."

"You can help me—help us all—if you will."

"Is it about Fritz?"

She bent her head and signed to me to open the gate. Across the high-road a stile faced us, and a little church, with an acre framed in elms and set about with trimmed yews. She led the way to the low and whitewashed porch, and pushed open the iron-studded door. As I followed, the name of Van der Knoope repeated itself on many mural tablets. Almost at the end of the south aisle she paused and lifted a finger and pointed.

I read—

SACRED
To the Memory of
FRITZ OPDAM DE KEYSER VAN DER KNOOPE
A Midshipman of the Royal Navy
Who was born Oct. 21st MDCCCLXVII.
And Drowned
By the Capsizing of H.M.S. Viper
off the North Coast of Ireland
On the 17th of January MDCCCLXXXV.
A youth of peculiar promise who lacked
but the greater indulgence of
an all-wise Providence
to earn the distinction of his forefathers
(of whom he was the last male representative)
in his Country's service
in which
he laid down his young life

Heu miserande puer! Si qua fata aspera rumpas
Tu Marcellus eris.

"Uncle Melchior had it set up. I wonder what Fritz was really like."

"And your Uncle Peter still believes—?"

"Oh yes. I am to marry Fritz in time. That is where you must help us. It would kill Uncle Peter if he knew. But Uncle Melchior gets puzzled whenever it comes to writing; and I am afraid of making mistakes. We've put him down in the South Pacific station at present—that will last for two years more. But we have to invent the gossip, you know. And I thought that you—who wrote stories—"

"My dear young lady," I said, "let me be Fritz, and you shall have a letter duly once a month."

And my promise was kept—until, two years ago, she wrote that there was no further need for letters, for Uncle Peter was dead. For aught I know, by this time Uncle Melchior may be dead also. But regularly, as the monthly date comes round, I am Fritz Opdam de Keyser van der Knoope, a young midshipman of Her Majesty's Navy; and wonder what my affianced bride is doing; and see her on the terrace steps with those butterflies floating about her. In my part of the world it is believed that the souls of the departed pass into these winged creatures. So might the souls of those many pictured Admirals: but some day, before long, I hope to cross Skirrid again and see.

THE PENANCE OF JOHN EMMET

I HAVE thought fit in this story to alter all the names involved and disguise the actual scene of it: and have done this so carefully that, although the story has a key, the reader who should search for it would not only waste his time but miss even the poor satisfaction of having guessed an idle riddle. He whom I call Parson West is now dead. He was an entirely conscientious man; which means that he would rather do wrong himself than persuade or advise another man—above all, a young man—to do it. I am sure therefore that in burying the body of John Emmet as he did, and enlisting my help, he did what he thought right, though the action was undoubtedly an illegal one. Still, the question is one for casuists; and remembering how modest a value my old friend set on his own wisdom, I dare say that by keeping his real name out of the narrative I am obeying what would have been his wish. His small breach of the law he was (I know) prepared to answer for cheerfully, should the facts come to light. He has now gone where their discovery affects him not at all.

Parson West, then, when I made his acquaintance in 188–, had for thirty years been Vicar of the coast-parish of Lansulyan. He had come to it almost fresh from Oxford, a young scholar with a head full of Greek, having accepted the living from his old college as a step

towards preferment. He was never to be offered another. Lansulyan parish is a wide one in acreage, and the stipend exiguous even for a bachelor. From the first the Parson eked out his income by preparing small annotated editions of the Classics for the use of schools, and by taking occasional pupils, of whom in 188– I was the latest. He could not teach me scholarship, which is a habit of mind; but he could, and in the end did, teach me how to win a scholarship, which is a sum of money paid annually. I have therefore a practical reason for thinking of him with gratitude: and I believe he liked me, while despising my Latinity and discommending my precociousness with tobacco.

His pupils could never complain of distraction. The church-town—a single street of cottages winding round a knoll of elms which hide the Vicarage and all but the spire of St. Julian's Church—stands high and a mile back from the coast, and looks straight upon the Menawhidden reef, a fringe of toothed rocks lying parallel with the shore and half a mile distant from it. This reef forms a breakwater for a small inlet where the coombe which runs below Lansulyan meets the sea. Follow the road downhill from the church-town and along the coombe, and you come to a white-washed fishing haven, with a life-boat house and short sea-wall. The Porth is its only name. On the whole, if one has to live in Lansulyan parish the Porth is gayer than the church-town, where from the Vicarage windows you look through the trees southward upon ships moving up or down Channel in the blue distance and the white water girdling Menawhidden; northward upon downs where herds of ponies wander at will between the treeless farms, and a dun-coloured British earthwork tops

the high sky-line. Dwellers among these uplands, wringing their livelihood from the obstinate soil by labour which never slackens, year in and year out, from Monday morning to Saturday night, are properly despised by the inhabitants of the Porth, who sit half their time mending nets, cultivating the social graces, and waiting for the harvest which they have not sown to come floating past their doors. By consequence, if a farmer wishes to learn the spiciest gossip about his nearest neighbour, he must travel down to the Porth for it.

And this makes it the more marvellous that what I am about to tell, happening as it did at the very gates of the Porth, should have escaped the sharpest eyes in the place.

The Vicar's custom was to read with me for a couple of hours in the morning and again for an hour and a half before dinner. We had followed this routine rigidly and punctually for three months or so when, one evening in June, he returned from the Porth a good ten minutes late, very hot and dusty, and even so took a turn or two up and down the room with his hands clasped behind his coat-tails before settling down to correct my iambics.

"John Emmet is dead," he announced, pausing before the window with his back towards me and gazing out upon the ill-kept lawn.

"Wasn't he the coxswain of the life-boat?" I asked.

"Ah, to be sure, you never saw him, did you? He took to his bed before you came . . . a long illness. Well, well, it's all over!" Parson West sighed. "He saved, or helped to save, a hundred and fifteen lives, first and last. A hundred and fifteen lives!"

"I've heard something of the sort down at the Porth. A hundred and fifty, I think they said. They seemed very proud of him down there."

"Why?" The Vicar faced round on me, and added after a moment abruptly—"He didn't belong to them: he wasn't even born in this parish."

"Where then?"

He disregarded the question. "Besides, the number was a hundred and fifteen: that's just the pity."

I did not understand: but he had seated himself at table and was running through my iambics. In the third verse he underlined a faulty elision with blue pencil and looked up for an explanation. While I confessed the fault, his gaze wandered away from me and fell upon his fingers drumming upon the table's edge. A slant of red sunshine touched the signet-ring on his little finger, which he moved up and down watching the play of light on the rim of the collet. He was not listening. By and by he glanced up, "I beg your pardon—" stammered he, and leaving the rest of my verses uncorrected, pointed with his pencil to the concluding one. "That's not Greek," he said.

"It's in Sophocles," I contended: and turning up the word in "Liddell and Scott," I pushed the big lexicon under his nose.

For a moment he paid no heed to the action; did not seem to grasp the meaning of it. Then for the first and last time in my acquaintance with him he broke into a passion of temper.

"What do you mean, Sir? It's offensive, I tell you: a downright offensive, ungentlemanly thing to do! Yes, Sir, ungentlemanly!" He crumpled up my verses and tossed them into the waste-paper basket.

"We had better get on with our Tacitus." And "Offensive!" I heard him muttering once more, as he picked up the book and found his place. I began to construe. His outburst had disconcerted me, and no doubt I performed discreditably: but glancing up in some apprehension after a piece of guess-work which even to me carried no conviction, I saw that again he was not attending. After this, by boldly skipping each difficulty as it arose I managed to cover a good deal of ground with admirable fluency.

We dined together in silence that evening, and after dinner strolled out to the great elm-tree under which, for a few weeks in the year, Parson West had his dessert laid and sipped his thin port—an old common-room fashion to which he clung. To the end of his days he had the white cloth removed before dessert, and the fruits and the one decanter set out upon polished mahogany.

I glanced at him while helping myself to strawberries and cream. He sat nervously folding and refolding the napkin on his knee. By and by he spoke, but without looking at me.

"I lost my temper this afternoon, and I beg your pardon, my boy."

I began to stammer my contrition for having offended him: but he cut me short with a wave of the hand. "The fact is," he explained, "I was worried by something quite different."

"By John Emmet's death," I suggested.

He nodded, and looked at me queerly while he poured out a glass of Tarragona.

"He was my gardener years ago, before he set up market-gardening on his own account."

"That's queer too," said I.

"What's queer?" He asked it sharply.

"Why, to find a gardener cox'n of a life-boat."

"He followed the sea in early life. But I'll tell you what *is* queer, and that's his last wish. His particular desire was that I, and I alone, should screw down the coffin. He had Trudgeon the carpenter up to measure him, and begged this of me in Trudgeon's presence and the doctor's. What's more, I consented."

"That's jolly unpleasant," was my comment, for lack of a better.

The Vicar sat silent for a while, staring across the lawn, while I watched a spider which had let itself down from a branch overhead and was casting anchor on the decanter's rim. With his next question he seemed to have changed the subject.

"Where do you keep your boat now?"

"Renatus Warne has been putting in a new strake and painting her. I shall have her down on the beach to-morrow."

"Ah, so that's it? I cast my eye over the beach this afternoon and couldn't see her. You haven't been trying for the conger lately."

"We'll have a try to-morrow evening if you'll come, Sir. I wish you would."

The Vicar, though he seldom found time for the sport, was a famous fisherman. He shook his head; and then, leaning an arm on the table, gazed at me with sudden seriousness.

"Look here: could you make it convenient to go fishing for conger this next night or two—*and to go alone*?"

I saw that he had something more to say, and waited.

"The fact is," he went on after a glance towards the house, "I have a ticklish job to carry through—the queerest in all my experience; and unfortunately I want help as well as secrecy. After some perplexity I've resolved to ask you: because, upon my word, you're the only person I can ask. That doesn't sound flattering—eh? But it isn't your fitness I doubt, or your nerve. I've hesitated because it isn't fair to drag you into an affair which, I must warn you, runs counter to the law in a small way."

I let out a low whistle. "A smuggling job?" I suggested.

"Good Heavens, boy! What do you take me for?"

"I beg your pardon, then. But when you talk of a row-boat—at night—a job that wants secrecy—breaking the law——"

"I'll have to tell you the whole tale, I see: and it's only fair."

"Not a bit," said I stoutly. "Tell me what you want done and I'll do it. Afterwards tell me your reasons, if you care to. Indeed, Sir, I'd rather have it that way, if you don't mind. I was abominably disrespectful this afternoon——"

"No more about *that*."

"But I *was*: and with your leave, Sir, that's the form of apology I'll choose."

And I stood up with my hands in my pockets.

"Nonsense, nonsense," said the Vicar, eyeing me with a twinkle. But I nodded back in the most determined manner.

"Your instructions, sir—that is, unless you prefer to get another helper."

"But I cannot," pleaded he. "That's the mischief."

"Very well, then. Your instructions, please." And thus I had my way.

This happened on a Tuesday. The next evening I walked down to the Porth and launched my boat. A row of idlers watched me from the long bench under the life-boat house, and a small knot on the beach inspected my fishing-gear and lent a hand to push off. "Ben't goin' alone, be 'e?" asked Renatus Warne. "Yes," said I. "The conger'll have 'ee then, sure enough." One or two offered chaffingly to come out and search for me if I shouldn't return before midnight; and a volley of facetious warnings followed me out upon the calm sea.

The beach was deserted, however, when I returned. I had hooked three fine conger; and having hauled up the boat and cleaned her, I made my way back to the vicarage, well pleased, getting to bed as the clock struck two in the morning.

This was Thursday; and in the evening, between seven and eight o'clock, I launched the boat again under the eyes of the population and started fishing on the inner grounds, well in sight of the Porth. Dusk fell, and with it the young moon dropped behind the western headland. Far out beyond Menawhidden the riding-lights of a few drifters sparkled in the darkness: but I had little to fear from them.

The moon had no sooner disappeared than I shifted my ground, and pulling slowly down in the shore's shadow (I had greased the leathers of my oars for silence), ran the boat in by the point under Gunner's Meadow, beached her cunningly between two rocks, and pulled a tarpaulin over to hide her white-painted interior. My only danger now lay in blundering

against the coastguard: but by dodging from one big boulder to another and listening all the while for foot-steps, I gained the withy bed at the foot of the meadow. The night was almost pitch-black, and no one could possibly detect the boat unless he searched for it.

I followed the little stream up the valley bottom, through an orchard, and struck away from it across another meadow and over the rounded shoulder of the hill to my right. This brought me in rear of a kitchen-garden and a lonely cob-walled cottage, the front of which faced down a dozen precipitous steps upon the road leading from Lansulyan to the Porth. The cottage had but one window in the back, in the upper floor; and just beneath it jutted out a lean-to shed, on the wooden side of which I rapped thrice with my knuckles.

"Hist!" The Vicar leaned out from the dark window above. "Right: it's all ready. We must stow it in the outhouse. Trudgeon is down in the road below, waiting for me to finish."

No more was said. The Vicar withdrew: after a minute I heard the planking creak, then something white glimmered in the opening of the window—something like a long bundle of linen, extruded inch by inch, then lowered on to the penthouse roof and let slide slowly down towards me.

"Got it?"

"Right." I steadied it a moment by its feet, then let it slide into my arms, and lowered it on to the gravelled path. It was the body of John Emmet, in his winding-sheet.

"Carry it into the shed," whispered the Vicar. "I

must show Trudgeon the coffin and hand him the keys. When I've got rid of him I'll come round."

Somehow, the second time of handling it was far worse than the first. The chill of the corpse seemed to strike through its linen wrappers. But I lifted it inside, shut the door upon it, and stood wiping my forehead, while the Vicar closed the window cautiously, drew the blind, and pressed-to the clasp.

A minute later I heard him calling from the front, "Mr. Trudgeon—Mr. Trudgeon"; and Trudgeon's hob-nailed boots ascending the steps. Silence followed for many minutes: then a slant of candlelight faded off the fuchsia-bush round the corner, and the two men stumbled down the staircase—stood muttering on the doorstep while a key grated in the lock—stumbled down the steps and stood muttering in the sunken roadway. At length they said "Good-night" and parted. I listened while the sound of their footsteps died away: Trudgeon's down the hill towards the Porth, the Vicar's up towards the church-town.

After this I had some painful minutes. As they dragged by, an abominable curiosity took hold of me, an itch to open the door of the shed, strike a match, and have a look at the dead face I had never seen. Then came into my mind a passage in the *Republic* which I had read a fortnight before—how that one Leontius, the son of Aglaion, coming up one day from the Piræus under the north wall of the city, observed some corpses lying on the ground at the place of execution; and how he fought between his desire to look and his abhorrence until at length, the fascination mastering him, he forced his eyes open with his fingers and ran up exclaiming, "Look, wretches, look! Feed

your fill on the fair sight!" . . . My seat was an inverted flower-pot, and clinging to it I began to count. If the Vicar did not arrive before I reached five hundred, why, then . . .

"*Hist!*" He had fetched his compass round by the back of the garden, treading so softly that the signal sounded almost in my ear and fetched me off my flower-pot in a nervous quake. He wore a heavy pea-jacket, and, as a smell of hot varnish announced, carried a dark lantern beneath it. He had strapped this to his waist-belt to leave both hands free.

We lifted the body out and carried it across the meadow, the Vicar taking the shoulders and I the heels. And now came the real hazard of the night. If the coastguard or any belated wanderer should blunder upon us, we stood convicted of kidnapping a corpse, and (as the Vicar afterwards allowed) there was simply no explanation to be given. When we gained the orchard and pushed through the broken fence, every twig that crackled fetched my heart into my mouth: and I drew my first breath of something like ease when at length, in the withy bed at the foot of Gunner's Meadow, we laid our burden down behind the ruin of an old cob-wall and took a short rest before essaying the beach.

But that breath was hardly drawn before I laid a warning hand on the Vicar's sleeve. Someone was coming down the cliff-track: the coastguard, no doubt. He halted on the wooden footbridge, struck a match and lit his pipe. From our covert not ten yards away I saw the glow on his face as he shielded the match in the hollow of both his hands. It was the coastguard —a fellow called Simms. His pipe lit, I expected

him to resume his walk. But no: he loitered there. For what reason, on earth? Luckily his back was towards us now: but to me, as I cowered in the plashy mud and prayed against sneezing, it seemed that the damnatory smell of the Vicar's lantern must carry for half a mile at least.

And now I heard another footstep, coming from the westward, and a loose stone kicked over the cliff. Another coastguard! The pair hailed each other, and stood on the footbridge talking together for a good three minutes.

Then to our infinite relief they parted with a "So long!" and each made slowly off by the way he had come. It was just a meeting of the patrols after all.

Another ten minutes must have gone by before we dared to lift the body again: and after a nervous while in crossing the beach we found the boat left high and dry by the ebb, and had an interminable job to get her down to the water without noise. I climbed in and took the oars: the Vicar lifted a sizeable stone on board and followed.

"The Carracks," he whispered. "That's the spot he named to me."

So I pulled out towards the Carracks, which are three points of rock lying just within the main barrier of Menawhidden, where it breaks up towards its western end into a maze of islets. While I pulled, the Vicar knelt on the bottom-boards and made fast the stone to John Emmet's feet.

Well, I need not tell the rest of our adventure at length. We reached the Carracks, and there the Vicar pulled out a short surplice from the immense inner pocket of his pea-jacket, donned it, and read the burial

service in due form by the light of his dark lantern: and by the light of it, as I arranged John Emmet's shroud, I had my first and last glimpse of his face—a thin face, old and hollow, with grey side-whiskers: a face extraordinarily pallid: in other circumstances perhaps not noticeable unless it were for a look of extreme weariness which had lasted even into the rest of death.

"We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body (when the sea shall give up her dead), and the life of the world to come. . . ."

Together we balanced it on the gunwale, and with the help of the stern-board tilted it over. It dropped, into fifteen fathoms of water.

There was another funeral next day in Lansulyan churchyard—where so many have come to be buried who never in life heard the name of Lansulyan: the harvest of Menawhidden, commemorated on weather-beaten stones and, within the church, on many tablets which I used to con on Sundays during the Vicar's discourses. The life-boat men had mustered in force, and altogether there was a large attendance at the graveside. At one point a fit of coughing interrupted the Vicar in his recital of the service. I was the one auditor, however, who understood the meaning of it.

That evening we took our dessert again under the great elm. Somehow I felt certain he would choose this hour for his explanation: and in due course it came.

"I'm a truth-speaking man by habit," he began after a long gaze upwards at the rooks now settling to roost

and making a mighty pother of it. "But I'm afraid there's no getting round the fact that this afternoon I acted a lie. And yet, on the whole, my conscience is easy."

He sipped his wine, and went on meditatively—

"Morals have their court of equity as well as the law of the land: and with us"—the Vicar was an old-fashioned Churchman—"that court is the private conscience. In this affair you insisted on putting your conscience into my hands. Well, I took the responsibility, and charge myself with any wrong you have committed, letting your confidence stand to your credit, as well as the service you have done for me—and another. Do you know the grey marble tablet on the south wall of the church—the *Nerbuddha* monument?"

I nodded.

"'*Sacred to the memory of Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Stanhope, C.B., and* 105 *Officers and Men of Her Majesty's* 2*-th Regiment of Foot, lost in the wreck of the Nerbuddha, East Indiaman, on Menawhidden, January* 15*th,* 1857. . . ." Then follows a list of the officers. Underneath, if you remember, is a separate slab to the officers and crew of the *Nerbuddha*, who behaved admirably, all the senior officers keeping order to the last and going down with the ship."

I nodded again, for I knew the inscriptions pretty well by heart.

"The wreck happened in the first winter of my incumbency here. Then, as now, I had one pupil living with me, an excellent fellow. Dick Hobart was his name, his age seventeen or thereabouts, and my business to put some polish on a neglected education before he entered the Army. His elder brother had

been a college friend of mine, and indeed our families had been acquainted for years.

"Dick slept in the room you now occupy. He had a habit, which I never cured, of sitting up late over a pipe and a yellow-backed novel: and so he happened to be dressed that night when he saw the first signal of distress go up from Menawhidden. He came to my room at once and called me up: and while I tumbled out and began to dress, he ran down to Porth to give the alarm.

"The first signal, however, had been seen by the folks down there, and he found the whole place in a hubbub. Our first life-boat had arrived less than three months before; but the crew got her off briskly, and were pulling away lustily for the reef when it occurred to a few of those left behind that the sea running was not too formidable for a couple of seine-boats lying high on the beach: and within five minutes these were hauled down and manned with scratch crews—Dick Hobart among them.

"Three days of east wind had knocked up a heavy swell: but the wind was blowing a moderate gale only —nothing to account for a big ship (as she was already reported to be) finding herself on Menawhidden. Three signals only had been shown, and these in quick succession. We learned afterwards that she went down within twelve minutes of striking. She had dashed straight on the Carracks, with the wind well behind her beam, topmasts housed for the night, but, barring that, canvassed like a well-found ship sure of her sea-room. And the Carracks had torn the bottom out of her.

"The difficulty with the life-boat and two seine-boats was to find the position of the wreck, the night

being pitch dark and dirty, and the calls and outcries of the poor creatures being swept down the wind to the westward. Our fellows pulled like Trojans, however, hailing and ahoying as they went; and about halfway down the line of Menawhidden they came on the first of the *Nerbuddha's* boats, laden with women and children, in charge of the fourth officer and half-a-dozen seamen. From her they learned the vessel's name and whereabouts, and having directed her on her way to the Porth, hurried forward again. They passed another boat similarly laden, and presently heard the distracting cries of swimmers, and drove straight into the wreckage and the struggling crowd of bodies. The life-boat rescued twenty-seven, and picked up four more on a second journey: the first seine-boat accounted for a dozen: the second (in which Hobart pulled an oar) was less fortunate, saving five only—and yet, as I shall tell you, my young friend had (and, for that matter, still has) abundant reason to be thankful for his voyage in her; for on that night he plucked from the sea the greatest treasure of his life.

"She—for it was a small girl of seven, and he took her from the arms of a seaman who died soon after being lifted into the boat—turned out to be the Colonel's daughter. She had stood by her mother's side above the gangway while the women passed down the side into the boats: for that noble English lady had insisted that as it was the Colonel's duty to follow his men, so it was for the Colonel's wife to wait until every other woman and every child had filed past. The *Nerbuddha* had gone down under her as she stood there beside her husband, steadied by his hand on her shoulder. Both bodies were afterwards recovered.

"Altogether fifty-two were buried in this parish: other bodies were washed ashore or picked up from time to time, some at great distances up and down the Channel. In the end the list of those unaccounted for came to forty, or by other accounts thirty-six. That was my first experience of what Menawhidden could do. I have had many since: but to this day our little church—yes, even when we decorate it for harvest-festival and pile the sheaves within the Communion rails—remains for me the dark little building where the bodies lay in rows waiting to be identified, and where I and half a dozen volunteers took turns in keeping watch day and night while the windows shook and the damp oozed down the walls.

"The cause of the wreck was never made clear. The helmsman had gone, and the captain (his body was among the missing), and the first, second, and third officers. But two seamen who had been successively relieved at the wheel in the early hours of the night agreed on the course set by the captain. It was a course which must finally bring them straight on Menawhidden. Yet there was no evidence to show that the captain changed it. The men knew nothing of Channel navigation, and had simply obeyed orders. She had struck during the first mate's watch. The fourth officer (survivor) had also been on deck. He gave evidence that his superior, Mr. Rands, had said nothing about the course. For his own part he had supposed the ship to be a good fifteen miles from the coast. They had sighted no shore-lights to warn them: but the weather was hazy. Five minutes before the catastrophe Mr. Rands had remarked that the wind was increasing, but had deferred shortening sail. The

ship was an old one, but newly rigged throughout. Her compasses had been adjusted and the ship swung at Greenhithe, just before the voyage. Mr. Murchison, the captain, was a trusted commander of the H.E.I.C.: he came originally from Liverpool, and had worked his way up in the company's service: a positive man and something of a disciplinarian, almost a martinet—not a man who would bear crossing easily. He was in his cabin, but came on deck at once, ready dressed; and had, with Colonel Stanhope's assistance, kept admirable order, getting out the three boats as promptly as possible. A fourth had actually been launched, and was being manned when the vessel plunged and stove her in as she went down.

"That is as much as needs be told about the *Nerbuddha*. Let me get on to the happier part of the story, that which concerns Dick Hobart and the small girl whom by Heaven's mercy he helped to save. Her name was Felicia—Felicia Rose Derwent Stanhope in full. Her uncle and guardian, Sir John Derwent, came down and fetched her home, with the bodies of her father and mother. I have told you that Dick was just then waiting for his commission, which, by the way, his family could poorly afford to purchase. Well, in recognition of his 'gallantry' (as the old gentleman was good enough to term it) Sir John, who possessed a good deal of influence, had him gazetted within six weeks, and to the 2-th Regiment—'for which,' so ran the gracious letter bringing the news, 'you have performed the first of what I hope will be a long list of distinguished services.'

"Pretty, was it not? Yes, but there's prettier to come. Felicia, who was an only child and quite an

heiress in a small way, kept up from the first a steady correspondence with her 'preserver': childish letters, to begin with, but Dick kept them all. In Bombay, in Abyssinia, for a few weeks in England (when he saw her for the first time since the wreck), then back in India again, he has told me since that the world held but one woman for him, and that was the little girl growing up to womanhood in her Bedfordshire home.

"Well it all happened as you are guessing. Dick, who had inherited a little money by this time, and was expecting his majority, returned to England in '72 on a long furlough. Needless to say he paid a visit to Cressingham, where Felicia lived under the wing of a widowed aunt: equally needless to say what happened there. The engagement was a short one—six weeks: and Dick flattered me immensely with an invitation to come up and perform the ceremony."

The Vicar paused, refilled his glass, and leaning back gazed up at the now silent nests. "All this," thought I, "may be mighty interesting in its way, but what——"

"But what, you'll be asking, has all this to do with John Emmet? I'm coming to that. On the evening of my arrival at Cressingham, Dick, who was lodging at the village inn where I too had a room, took me over to pay my respects to the ladies. We had taken our leave and were passing down the pretty avenue of limes to the entrance gates, when he paused and hailed a man stooping over a fountain in the Italian garden on our left, and apparently clearing it of dead leaves.

"'Hi! John Emmet!'

"The man straightened his back, faced round, and came towards, us, touching his hat.

"'This is the gentleman, John, who has come ex-

pressly to tie the knot next Wednesday. You must know,' said Dick, turning to me, 'that Miss Felicia and John Emmet are sworn friends, and he owes me a mighty grudge for taking her away. He's been gardener here for fifteen—sixteen—how many years is it, John?'

"'Then,' said I, 'I suppose you were here before the wreck of the *Nerbuddha*, and knew Miss Felicia's parents?'

"The man gave a start, and his hat, which he had pulled off, and with the brim of which he was fumbling, slipped from his fingers and rolled on the turf.

"'Oh, yes, I forgot!' put in Dick. 'I ought to have told you that Mr. West here is the Rector of Lansulyan, and was at the time of the wreck.'

"'Indeed, Sir!' John Emmet had recovered his hat, and confronted me with a face for which I spared a glance before bending my eyes on the daisies at my feet. 'I—I took service here some months after that event.'

"'Come, Padre'—these were the next words I heard —'if you wish to prod up all the daisies on Felicia's property, arise early to-morrow and begin. But if we're to dine at the Hall to-night it's time to be getting back to the inn and changing our clothes.'

"I looked up, and my eyes fell on the retreating back of John Emmet, already half-way towards the Italian garden.

"'Queer fellow, that—what's his name?—John Emmet,' said I late that night on our return to the inn, as Dick and I mixed our whiskey and prepared for a smoke before his sitting-room fire.

"'Tile loose, I fancy,' answered Dick, pausing with

a lighted match in his hand. 'I've an idea that he owes me a grudge for coming here and carrying off Felicia.'

"'What gives you that notion?'

"'Well, you see he has always been a favourite of hers. She tells me that the hours she managed to steal and spend in the garden, chatting with John Emmet while he worked, were the happiest in her childhood. He seems to have been a kind of out-of-door protector to her, and I'll bet she twisted him round her small thumb.'

"'That's little enough to go upon,' was my comment. 'It struck me, on the contrary, that the man eyed you with some affection, not to say pride.'

"'Well, it's a small thing, but I can't help remembering how he took the news of Felicia's—of our engagement. You see, it happened at a fancy-dress dance.'

"'What happened?'

"'Don't be dense, Padre. Why, *it*—the engagement. The dance was given by some people who live two miles from here—people called Bargrave. Felicia and I drove over. She wore an old Court dress of her grandmother's or great-grandmother's: I'm no hand at costumes, and can only tell you that she looked particularly jolly in it. I went in uniform—mess uniform, that is. It's one of the minor advantages o the service that on these occasions a man hasn't to put on a cavalier's wig and look like a goat out for a holiday. Well, as I was saying, at this particular dance *it* happened. It was daybreak when we started to drive home; a perfect midsummer morning, sun shining, dew on the hedges, and the birds singing fit to split

themselves. Felicia and I had a lot to say to each other, naturally; and it occurred to us to stop the carriage at the gates and send it on while we walked up to the house together. We took the path leading through the Italian garden, and there — pretty well in the same place where you saw him this afternoon—we came on John Emmet, already out and at work: or rather he was leaning on a hoe and staring after the carriage as it moved up the avenue behind the limes. We came on him from behind, and, I suppose, suddenly. Anyhow, we scared him. I never saw such a face in my life as he turned on us! It went all white in an instant, and then slowly whiter. No doubt our dress was unusual: but I'm not accustomed to be taken for a ghost——'

"'Was it *you* who frightened him?'

"'Yes, I think so. He kept his eyes on me, anyway: and at first, when Felicia asked him to congratulate her, he didn't seem to hear. After a bit, however, he picked up his speech and muttered something about fate, and wishing her joy—I forget what. Felicia confessed afterwards that his face had fairly frightened her.'

"'Look here,' I asked; 'it may seem an irrelevant question, but has the 2-th made any changes in its uniform lately?—any important changes, I mean.'

"'No: the War Office has been obliging enough to leave us alone in that respect: out of sight out of mind, I suppose. In point of fact we've kept the same rig —officers and men—for something like a quarter of a century.' He paused. 'I see what you're driving at. The man, you think, may be an old deserter!'

"'Not so fast, please. Now here's another question.

You remember the night after the wreck of the *Nerbuddha*; the night you took a turn in Lansulyan Church, watching the bodies? You came to me in the morning with a story which I chose to laugh at——'

"'About the face at the window, you mean?' Dick gave a mock shudder. 'I suppose my nerves were shaken. I've been through some queer things since: but upon my soul I'd as soon face the worst of them again as take another spell with a line of corpses in that church of yours.'

"'But—the face?'

"'Well, at the time I'd have sworn I saw it: peering in through the last window westward in the south aisle —the one above the font. I ran out, you remember, and found nobody: then I fetched a lantern and flashed it about the churchyard.'

"'There were gravestones in plenty a man could hide behind. Should you remember the face?'

"Dick considered for a while. 'No: it didn't strike me as a face so much as a pair of eyes; I remember the eyes only. They were looking straight into mine.'

"'Well, now. I've always guessed there was something queer about that *Nerbuddha* business: though till now I've never told a soul my chief reason for believing so. After you left me that night, and while I was dressing, it occurred to me from the last of the three signals—the only one I saw—that the wreck must be somewhere near the Carracks, and that Farmer Tregaskis had a seine-boat drawn up by the old pallace [1] at Gunner's Meadow, just opposite the Carracks.'

"'It struck me that if it were possible to knock up Tregaskis and his boys and the farmhand who slept

[1] Pilchard store.

on the premises, and get this boat launched through the surf, we should reach the wreck almost as soon as the life-boat. So I took a lantern and ran across the fields to the farm. Lights were burning there in two or three windows, and Mrs. Tregaskis, who answered my knock, told me that her husband and the boys had already started off—she believed for Gunner's Meadow, to launch their boat. There had been talk of doing so, anyhow, before they set out. Accordingly, off I pelted hot-foot for the meadow, but on reaching the slope above it could see no lanterns either about the pallace or on the beach. It turned out afterwards that the Tregaskis family had indeed visited the beach, ten minutes ahead of me, but judging it beyond their powers to launch the boat short-handed through the surf, were by this time on their way towards the Porth. I thought this likely enough at the time, but resolved to run down and make sure.

"'Hitherto I had carried my lantern unlit: but on reaching the coombe bottom I halted for a moment under the lee of the pallace-wall to strike a match. In that moment, in a sudden lull of the breakers, it seemed to me that I heard a footstep on the loose stones of the beach; and having lit my candle hastily I ran round the wall and gave a loud hail. It was not answered: the sound had ceased: but hurrying down the beach with my lantern held high, I presently saw a man between me and the water's edge. I believe now that he was trying to get away unobserved: but finding this hopeless he stood still with his hands in his pockets, and allowed me to come up. He was bare-headed, and dressed only in shirt and trousers and boots. Somehow, though I did not recognise him, I

never doubted for a moment that the man belonged either to my own or the next parish. I was a newcomer in those days, you remember.

"'"Hallo!" said I, "where do you come from?"'

"'He stared at me stupidly and jerked his thumb over his shoulder towards the west. I inferred that he came from one of the shore-farms in that direction. He looked like a middle-aged farmer—a grizzled man with a serious, responsible face. "But you're wet through," I said, for his clothes were drenched.

"'For answer he pointed towards the surf, and lifting my lantern again, I detected a small cask floating a little beyond the breakers. Now before coming to Lansulyan I had heard some ugly tales of the wrecking done in these parts, and at the sight of this I fairly lost my temper. "It seems to me," said I, "a man of your age should be ashamed of himself, lurking here for miserable booty when there are lives to save! In God's name, if you have a spark of manhood in you, follow me to the Porth!" I swung off in a rage, and up the beach: after a moment I heard him slowly following. On the cliff track I swallowed down my wrath and waited for him to come up, meaning to expostulate more gently. He did not come up. I hailed twice, but he had vanished into the night.

"'Now this looked ugly. And on reflection, when I reached the Porth and heard men wondering how on earth a fine ship found herself on Menawhidden in such weather, it looked uglier yet. The fellow—now I came to think it over—had certainly shrunk from detection. Then, thirty hours later, came your story of the face, and upset me further. I kept my suspicions to myself, however. The matter was too grave

for random talking: but I resolved to keep eyes and ears open, and if this horrible practice of wrecking did really exist, to expose it without mercy.

"'Well, I have lived some years since in Lansulyan: and I am absolutely sure now that no such horrors exist, if they ever existed.'

"'But the man?' was Dick's query.

"'That's what I'm coming to. You may be sure I looked out for him: for, unlike you, I remembered the face I saw. Yet until to-day I have never seen it since.'

"'Until to-day?'

"'Yes. The man I saw on the beach was Miss Felicia's gardener, John Emmet. He has shaved his beard; but I'll swear to him.'

"All that Dick could do was to pull the pipe from his mouth and give a long whistle. 'But what do you make of it?' he asked with a frown.

"'As yet, nothing. Where does the man live?'

"'In a small cottage at the end of the village, just outside the gate of the kitchen-garden.'

"'Married?'

"'No: a large family lives next door and he pays the eldest girl to do some odd jobs of housework.'

"'Then to-morrow,' said I, 'I'll pay him a call.'

"'Seen your man?' asked Dick next evening, as we walked up towards the house, where again we were due for dinner.

"'I have just come from him: and what's more I have a proposition to make to Miss Felicia, if you and she can spare me an hour this evening.'

"The upshot of our talk was that, a week later, as I drove home from the station after my long railway journey, John Emmet sat by my side. He had taken service with me as gardener, and for nine years he served me well. You'll hardly believe it"—here the Vicar's gaze travelled over the unkempt flower-beds—"but under John Emmet's hand this garden of mine was a picture. The fellow would have half a day's work done before the rest of the parish was out of bed. I never knew a human creature who needed less sleep—that's not the way to put it, though—the man *couldn't* sleep: he had lost the power (so he said) ever since the night the *Nerbuddha* struck.

"So it was that every afternoon found the day's work ended in my garden, and John Emmet, in my sixteen-foot boat, exploring the currents and soundings about Menawhidden. And almost every day I went with him. He had become a learner—for the third time in his life; and the quickest learner (in spite of his years) I have ever known, for his mind was bent on that single purpose. I should tell you that the Trinity House had discovered Menawhidden at last and placed the bell-buoy there—which is and always has been entirely useless: also that the Lifeboat Institution had listened to some suggestions of mine and were reorganising the service down at the Porth. And it was now my hope that John Emmet might become coxswain of the boat as soon as he had local knowledge to back up the seamanship and aptitude for command in which I knew him to excel every man in the Porth. There were jealousies, of course: but he wrangled with no man, and in the end I had my way pretty easily. Within four years of his coming John Emmet knew more of

Menawhidden than any man in the parish; possibly more than all the parish put together. And to-day the parish is proud of him and his record.

"But they do not know—and you are to be one of the four persons in the world who know—that *John Emmet was no other than John Murchison, the captain who lost the 'Nerbuddha'!* He had come ashore in the darkness some five minutes before I had surprised him on the beach: had come ashore clinging to the keg which I saw floating just beyond the breakers. Then and there, stunned and confounded by the consequences of his carelessness, he had played the coward for the first and last time in his life. He had run away—and Heaven knows if in his shoes I should not have done the same. For two nights and a day a hideous fascination tied him to the spot. It was his face Dick had seen at the window. The man had been hiding all day in the trench by the north wall of the churchyard; as Dick ran out with a lantern he slipped behind a gravestone, and when Dick gave up the search, he broke cover and fled inland. He changed his name: let this be his excuse, he had neither wife nor child. The man knew something of gardening: he had a couple of pounds and some odd shillings in his pocket —enough to take him to one of the big midland towns —Wolverhampton, I think—where he found work as a jobbing gardener. But something of the fascination which had held him lurking about Lansulyan, drove him to Cressingham, which—he learned from the newspaper accounts of the wreck—was Colonel Stanhope's country seat. Or perhaps he had some vague idea that Heaven would grant him a chance to make amends. You understand now how the little Felicia became his idol.

"At Lansulyan he had but two desires. The first was to live until he had saved as many lives as his carelessness had lost in the *Nerbuddha*. For it was nothing worse, but mere forgetfulness to change the course: one of those dreadful lapses of memory which baffle all Board of Trade inquiry. You may light, and buoy and beacon every danger along the coast, and still you leave that small kink in the skipper's brain which will cast away a ship for all your care. The second of his desires you have helped me to fulfil. He wished in death to be John Murchison again, and lie where his ship lies: lie with his grand error atoned for. John Emmet needs no gravestone: for John Emmet lived but to earn John Murchison's right to a half-forgotten tablet describing him as a brave man. And I believe that Heaven, which does not count by tally, has granted his wish."

ELISHA

A ROUGH track—something between a footpath and a water-course—led down the mountain-side through groves of evergreen oak, and reached the Plain of Jezreel at the point where the road from Samaria and the south divided into two—its main stem still climbing due north towards Nazareth, while the branch bent back eastward and by south across the flat, arable country to join the Carmel road at Megiddo.

An old man came painfully down the mountain-track. He wore a white burnoos, and a brown garment of camel's hair, with a leathern belt that girt it high about his bare legs. He carried a staff, and tapped the ground carefully before planting his feet. It was the time of barley harvest, and a scorching afternoon. On the burnt plain below, the road to Megiddo shone and quivered in the heat. But he could not see it. Cataract veiled his eyes and blurred the whole landscape for them.

The track now wound about a foot-hill that broke away in a sharp slope on his right and plunged to a stony ravine. Once or twice he paused on its edge and peered downward, as if seeking for a landmark. He was leaning forward to peer again, but suddenly straightened his body and listened.

Far down in the valley a solitary dog howled. But the old man's ear had caught another sound, that came from the track, not far in front.

Cling—cling—clink! Cling—clink!

It was the sound of hammering; of stone on metal. *Cling—cling—clink!*

He stepped forward briskly, rounded an angle of rock, and found himself face to face with a man—as well as he could see, a tall man—standing upright by a heap of stones on the left edge of the path.

"May it be well with you, my son: and with every man who repairs a path for the traveller. But tell me if the way be unsafe hereabouts? For my eyes are very dim, and it is now many years since last I came over the hills to Shunem."

The man did not reply.

"——So many years that for nigh upon an hour I have been saying, 'Surely here should Shunem come in sight—or here—its white walls among the oaks below—the house of Miriam of Shunem.' But I forget the curtain on my eyes, and the oaks will have grown tall."

Still there came no answer. Slightly nettled, the old man went on—

"My son, it is said 'To return a word before hearing the matter is folly.' But also, 'Every man shall kiss the lips of him who answereth fit words.' And further, 'To the aged every stranger shall be a staff, nor shall he twice inquire his way.' Though I may not scan thy face, thou scannest mine; and I, who now am blind, have been a seer in Israel."

As he ceased, another figure—a woman's—stepped out, as it seemed to him, from behind the man; stepped forward and touched him on the arm.

"Hail, then, Elisha, son of Shaphat!"

"Thou knowest . . .?"

"Who better than Miriam of Shunem? Put near thy face and look."

"My eyes are very dim."

"And the oaks are higher than Shunem. My face has changed: my voice also."

"For the moment it was strange to me. As I came along I was reckoning thy years at three-score."

"Mayst add five."

"We may not complain. And thy son, how fares he?"

"That is he, behind us. He is a good son, and leaves his elders to speak first. If we sit awhile and talk he will wait for us."

"And thy house and the farm-steading?"

The woman threw a glance down towards the valley, and answered quickly—

"My master, shall we not sit awhile? The track here looks towards the plain. Sit, and through my eyes thou shalt see again distant Carmel and the fields between that used so to delight thee. Ah! not there!"

The old man had made as if to seat himself on one of the larger stones on the edge of the heap. But she prevented him quickly; was gone for a moment; and returned, rolling a moss-covered boulder to the right-hand of the path. The prophet sat himself down on this, and she on the ground at his feet.

"Just here, from my window below, I saw thee coming down the mountain with Gehazi, thy servant, on that day when it was promised to me that I should bear a son."

He nodded.

"For as often as we passed by," he said, "we found food and a little room prepared upon the wall. 'Thou hast been careful for us,' said I, 'with all this care. What is to be done for thee? Shall I speak to the King

for thee, or to the captain of the host?' Thine answer was, 'I dwell in Shunem, among my own people.'"

"There is no greener spot in Israel."

"'But,' said my servant Gehazi, 'every spot is greener where a child plays.' Therefore this child was promised thee."

She said, "But once a year the plain is yellow and not green; yellow away to the foot of Carmel; and that is in this season of the barley harvest. It was on such a day as this that my son fell in the field among the reapers, and his father brought him in and set him on my knees. On such a day as this I left him dead, and saddled the ass and rode between the same yellow fields to Megiddo, and thence towards Carmel, seeking thee. See the white road winding, and the long blue chine yonder, by the sea. By and by, when the sun sinks over it, the blue chine and the oaks beneath will turn to one dark colour; and that will be the hour that I met thee on the slope, and lighted off the ass and caught thee by the feet. As yet it is all parched fields and sky of brass and a white road running endless—endless."

"But what are these black shadows that pass between me and the sun?"

"They are crows, my master."

"What should they do here in these numbers?"

The woman rose and flung a stone at the birds. Seating herself again, she said—

"Below, the reapers narrow the circle of the corn; and there are conies within the circle. The kites and crows know it."

"But that day of which thou hast spoken—it ended in gladness. The Lord restored thy son to thee."

"Thou rather, man of God."

"My daughter, His mercy was very great upon thee. Speak no blasphemy, thou of all women."

"The Lord had denied me a son; but thou persuadedst Him, and He gave me one. Again, the Lord had taken my child in the harvest-field, but on thy wrestling gave him back. And again the Lord meditated to take my child by famine, but at thy warning I arose and conveyed him into the land of the Philistines, nor returned to Shunem till seven years' end. My master, thou art a prophet in Israel, but I am thinking——"

She broke off, rose, and flung another stone at the birds.

"My daughter, think not slightly of God's wisdom."

"Nay, man of God, I am thinking that God was wiser than thou or I."

The old prophet rose from his stone. His dull eyes tried to read her face. She touched his hand.

"Come, and see."

The figure of the man still stood, three paces behind them, upright against the hillside, as when Elisha had first turned the corner and come upon him. But now, led by Miriam, the prophet drew quite close and peered. Dimly, and then less dimly, he discerned first that the head had fallen forward on the breast, and that the hair upon the scalp was caked in dry blood; next, that the figure did not stand of its own will at all, but was held upright to a stout post by an iron ring about the neck and a rope about the waist. He put out a finger and touched the face. It was cold.

"Thy son?"

"They stoned him with these stones. His wife stood by."

"The Syrians?"

"The Syrians. They went northward before noon, taking her. The plain is otherwise burnt than on the day when I sought across it for his sake to Carmel."

"Well did King David entreat the hand of the Lord rather than the hand of man. I had not heard of thy son's marrying."

"Five years ago he went down with a gift to Philistia, to them that sheltered us in the famine. He brought back this woman."

"She betrayed him?"

"He heard her speak with a Syrian, and fled up the hill. From the little window in the wall—see, it smokes yet—she called and pointed after him. And they ran and overtook him. With this iron they fastened him, and with these stones they stoned him. Man of God, I am thinking that God was wiser than thou or I."

The old man stood musing, and touched the heap of stones gently, stone after stone, with the end of his staff.

"He was wiser."

Cling—cling—clink!

Miriam had taken up a stone, and with it was hammering feebly, impotently, upon the rivets in the iron band.

As the sun dropped below Carmel the prophet cast down his staff and stretched out two groping hands to help her.

"ONCE ABOARD THE LUGGER"[1]

EARLY last Fall there died in Troy an old man and his wife. The woman went first, and the husband took a chill at her grave's edge, when he stood bareheaded in a lashing shower. The loose earth crumbled under his feet, trickled over, and dropped on her coffin-lid. Through two long nights he lay on his bed without sleeping and listened to this sound. At first it ran in his ears perpetually, but afterwards he heard it at intervals only, in the pauses of acute suffering. On the seventh day he died, of pleuro-pneumonia; and on the tenth (a Sunday) they buried him. For just fifty years the dead man had been minister of the Independent chapel on the hill, and had laid down his pastorate two years before, on his golden wedding-day. Consequently there was a funeral sermon, and the young man, his successor, chose II. Samuel, i. 23, for his text —"Lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided." Himself a newly married man, he waxed dithyrambic on the sustained affection and accord of the departed couple. "Truly," he wound up, "such marriages as theirs were made in Heaven." And could they have heard, the two bodies in the cemetery had not denied it; but the woman, after the fashion of women, would have qualified the young minister's assertion in her secret heart.

[1] This is the short original of the Tale of *Ia*.

When, at the close of the year 1839, the Rev. Samuel Bax visited Troy for the first time, to preach his trial sermon at Salem Chapel, he arrived by Boutigo's van, late on a Saturday night, and departed again for Plymouth at seven o'clock on Monday morning. He had just turned twenty-one, and looked younger, and the zeal of his calling was strong upon him. Moreover he was shaken with nervous anxiety for the success of his sermon; so that it is no marvel if he carried away but blurred and misty impressions of the little port and the congregation that sat beneath him that morning, ostensibly reverent, but actually on the pounce for heresy or any sign of weakness. Their impressions, at any rate, were sharp enough. They counted his thumps upon the desk, noted his one reference to "the original Greek," saw and remembered the flush on his young face and the glow in his eyes as he hammered the doctrine of the redemption out of original sin. The deacons fixed the subject of these trial sermons, and had chosen original sin on the ground that a good beginning was half the battle. The maids in the congregation knew beforehand that he was unmarried, and came out of chapel knowing also that his eyes were brown, that his hair had a reddish tinge in certain lights; that one of his cuffs was frayed slightly, but his black coat had scarcely been worn a dozen times; with other trifles. They loitered by the chapel door until he came out in company with Deacon Snowden, who was conveying him off to dinner. The deacon on weekdays was harbour-master of the port, and on Sundays afforded himself roasted duck for dinner. Lizzie Snowden walked at her father's right hand. She was a slightly bloodless blonde, tall, with a

pretty complexion, and hair upon which it was rumoured she could sit if she were so minded. The girls watched the young preacher and his entertainers as they moved down the hill, the deacon talking and his daughter turning her head aside as if it were merely in the half of the world on her right hand that she took the least interest.

"That's to show 'en the big plait," commented one of the group behind. "He can't turn his head t'wards her, but it stares 'en in the face."

"An' her features look best from the left side, as everybody knows."

"I reckon, if he's chosen minister, that Lizzie 'll have 'en," said a tall, lanky girl. She was apprenticed to a dressmaker and engaged to a young tin-smith. Having laid aside ambition on her own account, she flung in this remark as an apple of discord.

"Jenifer Hosken has a chance. He's fair-skinned hissel', an' Lizzie's too near his own colour. Black's mate is white, as they say."

"There's Sue Tregraine. She'll have more money than either, when her father dies."

"What, marry one o' Ruan!" the speaker tittered despitefully.

"Why not?"

The only answer was a shrug. Ruan is a small town that faces Troy across the diminutive harbour, or perhaps I should say that Troy looks down upon it at this slight distance. When a Trojan speaks of it he says, "Across the water," with as much implied contempt as though he meant Botany Bay. There is no cogent reason for this, except that the poorer class at Ruan earns its livelihood by fishing. In the eyes of

its neighbours the shadow of this lonely calling is cast upwards upon its wealthier inhabitants. Troy depends on commerce, and in the days of which I write employed these wealthier men of Ruan to build ships for it. Further it did not condescend. Intermarriage between the towns was almost unheard of, and even now it is rare. Yet they are connected by a penny ferry.

"Her father's a shipbuilder," urged Sue Tregraine's supporter.

"He might so well keep crab-pots, for all the chance she'll have."

Now there was a Ruan girl standing just outside this group, and she heard what was said. Her name was Nance Trewartha and her father was a fisherman, who did in fact keep crab-pots. Moreover, she was his only child, and helped him at his trade. She could handle a boat as well as a man, she knew every sea mark up and down the coast for thirty miles, she could cut up bait, and her hands were horny with handling ropes from her childhood. But on Sundays she wore gloves, and came across the ferry to chapel, and was as wise as any of her sex. She had known before coming out of her pew that the young minister had a well-shaped back to his head and a gold ring on his little finger with somebody's hair in the collet, under a crystal. She was dark, straight, and lissom of figure, with ripe lips and eyes as black as sloes, and she hoped that the hair in the minister's ring was his mother's. She was well aware of her social inferiority; but—the truth may be told—she chose to forget it that morning, and to wonder what this young man would be like as a husband. She had looked up into his face during

sermon-time, devouring his boyish features, noticing his refined accent, marking every gesture. Certainly he was comely and desirable. As he walked down the hill by Deacon Snowden's side, she was perfectly conscious of the longing in her heart, but prepared to put a stop to it, and go home to dinner as soon as he had turned the corner and passed out of sight. Then came that unhappy remark about the crab-pots. She bit her lip for a moment, turned, and walked slowly off towards the ferry, full of thought.

Three weeks after, the Rev. Samuel Bax received his call.

He arrived, to assume his duties, in at waning light of a soft January day. Boutigo's van set him down, with a carpet-bag, band-box, and chest of books, at the door of the lodgings which Deacon Snowden had taken for him. The house stood in the North Street, as it is called. It was a small, yellow-washed building, containing just half a dozen rooms, and of these the two set apart for the minister looked straight upon the harbour. Under his sitting-room window was a little garden, and at the end of the garden a low wall with a stretch of water beyond it, and a barque that lay at anchor but a stone's throw away, as it seemed, its masts stretching high against the misty hillside. A green-painted door was let into the garden wall—a door with two flaps, the upper of which stood open; and through this opening he caught another glimpse of grey water.

The landlady, who showed him into this room, and at once began to explain that the furniture was better than it looked, was hardly prepared for the rapture with which he stared out of window. His boyhood had

been spent in a sooty Lancashire town, and to him the green garden, the quay-door, the barque, and the stilly water, seemed to fall little short of Paradise.

"I reckoned you'd like it," she said. "An' to be sure, 'tis a blessing you do."

He turned his stare upon her for a moment. She was a benign-looking woman of about fifty, in a short-skirted grey gown and widow's cap.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because, leavin' out the kitchen, there's but four rooms, two for you an' two for me; two facin' the harbour, an' two facin' the street. Now, if you'd took a dislike to this look-out, I must ha' put you over the street, an' moved in here myself. I *do* like the street, too. There's so much more goin' on."

"I think this arrangement will be better in every way," said the young minister.

"I'm glad of it. Iss, there's no denyin' that I'm main glad. From upstairs you can see right down the harbour, which is prettier again. Would'ee like to see it now? O' course you would—an' it'll be so much handier for me answerin' the door, too. There's a back door at the end o' the passage. You've only to slip a bolt an' you'm out in the garden—out to your boat, if you choose to keep one. But the garden 's a tidy little spot to walk up an' down in an' make up your sermons, wi' nobody to overlook you but the folk next door; an' they'm church-goers."

After supper that evening, the young minister unpacked his books and was about to arrange them, but drifted to the window instead. He paused for a minute or two with his face close to the pane, and then

flung up the sash. A faint north wind breathed down the harbour, scarcely ruffling the water. Around and above him the frosty sky flashed with innumerable stars, and over the barque's masts, behind the long chine of the eastern hill, a soft radiance heralded the rising moon. It was a young moon, and, while he waited, her thin horn pushed up through the furze brake on the hill's summit and she mounted into the free heaven. With upturned eye the young minister followed her course for twenty minutes, not consciously observant; for he was thinking over his ambitions, and at his time of life these are apt to soar with the moon. Though possessed with zeal for good work in this small seaside town, he intended that Troy should be but a stepping-stone in his journey. He meant to go far. And while he meditated his future, forgetting the chill in the night air, it was being decided for him by a stronger will than his own. More than this, that will had already passed into action. His destiny was actually launched on the full spring tide that sucked the crevices of the grey wall at the garden's end.

A slight sound drew the minister's gaze down from the moon to the quay-door. Its upper flap still stood open, allowing a square of moonlight to pierce the straight black shadow of the garden wall.

In this square of moonlight were now framed the head and shoulders of a human being. The young man felt a slight chill run down his spine. He leant forward out of the window and challenged the apparition, bating his tone as all people bate it at that hour.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

There was no reply for a moment, though he felt

sure his voice must have carried to the quay-door. The figure paused for a second or two, then unbarred the lower flap of the door and advanced across the wall's shadow to the centre of the bright grass-plat under the window. It was the figure of a young woman. Her head was bare and her sleeves turned up to the elbows. She wore no cloak or wrap to cover her from the night air, and her short-skirted, coarse frock was open at the neck. As she turned up her face to the window, the minister could see by the moon's rays that it was well-favoured.

"Be you the new preacher?" she asked, resting a hand on her hip and speaking softly up to him.

"I am the new Independent minister."

"Then I've come for you."

"Come for me?"

"Iss; my name's Nance Trewartha, an' you'm wanted across the water, quick as possible. Old Mrs. Slade's a-dyin' to-night, over yonder."

"She wants me?"

"She's one o' your congregation, an' can't die easy till you've seen her. I reckon she's got something 'pon her mind; an' I was to fetch you over, quick as I could."

As she spoke the church clock down in the town chimed out the hour, and immediately after, ten strokes sounded on the clear air.

The minister consulted his own watch and seemed to be considering.

"Very well," said he after a pause. "I'll come. I suppose I must cross by the ferry."

"Ferry 's closed this two hours, an' you needn't wake up any in the house. I've brought father's boat to

the ladder below, an' I'll bring you back again. You've only to step out here by the back door. An' wrap yourself up, for 'tis a brave distance."

"Very well. I suppose it's really serious."

"Mortal. I'm glad you'll come," she added simply.

The young man nodded down in a friendly manner, and going back into the room, slipped on his overcoat, picked up his hat, and turned the lamp down carefully. Then he struck a match, found his way to the back-door, and unbarred it. The girl was waiting for him, still in the centre of the grass-plat.

"I'm glad you've come," she repeated, but this time there was something like constraint in her voice. As he pulled-to the door softly she moved, and led the way down to the water-side.

From the quay-door a long ladder ran down to the water. At low water one had to descend twenty feet and more; but now the high tide left but three of its rungs uncovered. At the young minister's feet a small fishing-boat lay ready, moored by a short painter to the ladder. The girl stepped lightly down and held up a hand.

"Thank you," said the young man with dignity, "but I do not want help."

She made no answer to this; but as he stepped down, went forward and unmoored the painter. Then she pushed gently away from the ladder, hoisted the small foresail, and, returning to her companion, stood beside him for a moment with her hand on the tiller.

"Better slack the fore-sheet," she said suddenly.

The young man looked helplessly at her. He had not the slightest idea of her meaning, did not in fact know the difference between a fore-sheet and a main-

sail. And it was just to find out the depth of his ignorance that she had spoken.

"Never mind," she said, "I'll do it myself."

She slackened and made fast the rope, and took hold of the tiller again. The sails shook and filled softly as they glided out from under the wall. The soft breeze blew straight behind them, the tide was just beginning to ebb. She loosed the main sheet a little, and the water hissed as they spun down under the grey town towards the harbour's mouth.

A dozen vessels lay at anchor below the town quay, their lamps showing a strange orange yellow in the moonlight; between them the minister saw the cottages of Ruan glimmering on the eastern shore, and over it the coastguard flagstaff, faintly pencilled above the skyline. It seemed to him that they were not shaping their course for the little town.

"I thought you told me," he said at length, "that Mrs. —— the dying woman—lived across there."

The girl shook her head. "Not in Ruan itsel'—Ruan parish. We'll have to go round the point."

She was leaning back and gazing straight before her, towards the harbour's mouth. The boat was one of the class that serves along that coast for hook-and-line as well as drift-net fishing, clinker-built, about twenty-seven feet in the keel, and nine in beam. It had no deck beyond a small cuddy forward, on top of which a light hoar-frost was gathering as they moved. The minister stood beside the girl, and withdrew his eyes from this cuddy roof to contemplate her.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that you don't take cold, wearing no wrap or bonnet on frosty nights like this?"

She let the tiller go for a moment, took his hand by the wrist, and laid it on her own bare arm. He felt the flesh, but it was firm and warm. Then he withdrew his hand hastily, without finding anything to say. His eyes avoided hers. When, after half a minute, he looked at her again, her gaze was fixed straight ahead, upon the misty stretch of sea beyond the harbour's mouth.

In a minute or two they were gliding out between the tall cliff and the reef of rocks that guard this entrance on either side. On the reef stood a wooden cross, painted white, warning vessels to give a wide berth; on the cliff a grey castle, with a battery before it, under the guns of which they spun seaward, still with the wind astern.

Outside, the sea lay as smooth as within the harbour. The wind blew steadily off the shore, so that, close-hauled, one might fetch up or down Channel with equal ease. The girl began to flatten the sails, and asked her companion to bear a hand. Their hands met over a rope, and the man noted with surprise that the girl's was feverishly hot. Then she brought the boat's nose round to the eastward and, heeling gently over the dark water, they began to skirt the misty coast with the breeze on their left cheeks.

"How much farther?" asked the minister.

She nodded towards the first point in the direction of Plymouth. He turned his coat-collar up about his ears and wondered if his duty would often take him on such journeys as this. Also he felt thankful that the sea was smooth. He might, or might not, be given to sea-sickness: but somehow he was sincerely glad that he had not to be put to the test for the first time in this girl's presence.

They passed the small headland and still the boat held on its way.

"I had no idea you were going to take me this distance. Didn't you promise me the house lay just beyond the point we've just passed?"

To his amazement the girl drew herself up, looked him straight in the face and said—

"There's no such place."

"*What?*"

"There's no such place. There's nobody ill at all. I told you a lie."

"You told me a lie—then why in the name of common sense am I here?"

"Because, young man—because, sir, I'm sick o' love for you, an' I want'ee to marry me."

"Great heaven!" the young minister muttered, recoiling. "Is the girl mad?"

"Ah, but look at me, sir!" She seemed to grow still taller as she stood there, resting one hand on the tiller and gazing at him with perfectly serious eyes. "Look at me well before you take up with some other o' the girls. To-morrow they'll be all after 'ee, an' this 'll be my only chance; for my father's no better'n a plain fisherman, an' they're all above me in money an' rank. I be but a Ruan girl, an' my family is naught. But look at me well; there's none stronger nor comelier, nor that'll love thee so dear!"

The young man gasped. "Set me ashore at once!" he commanded, stamping his foot.

"Nay, that I will not till thou promise, an' that's flat. Dear lad, listen—an' consent, consent—an' I swear to thee thou'll never be sorry for 't."

"I never heard such awful impropriety in my life.

Turn back; I order you to steer back to the harbour at once!"

She shook her head. "No, lad; I won't. An' what's more, you don't know how to handle a boat, an' couldn't get back by yoursel', not in a month."

"This is stark madness. You—you abandoned woman, how long do you mean to keep me here?"

"Till thou give in to me. We'm goin' straight t'wards Plymouth now, an' if th' wind holds—as 'twill—we'll be off the Rame in two hours. If you haven't said me yes by that maybe we'll go on; or perhaps we'll run across to the coast o' France——"

"Girl, do you know that if I'm not back by daybreak, I'm ruined!"

"And oh, man, man! Can't 'ee see that I'm ruined, too, if I turn back without your word? How shall I show my face in Troy streets again, tell me?"

At this sudden transference of responsibility the minister was staggered.

"You should have thought of that before," he said, employing the one obvious answer.

"O' course I thought of it. But for love o' you I made up my mind to risk it. An' now there's no goin' back." She paused a moment and then added, as a thought struck her, "Why, lad, doesn' that prove I love 'ee uncommon?"

"I prefer not to consider the question. Once more—will you go back?"

"I can't."

He bit his lips and moved forward to the cuddy, on the roof of which he seated himself sulkily. The girl tossed him an end of rope.

"Dear, better coil that up an' sit 'pon it. The frost 'll strike a chill into thee."

With this she resumed her old attitude by the tiller. Her eyes were fixed ahead, her gaze passing just over the minister's hat. When he glanced up he saw the rime twinkling on her shoulders and the star-shine in her dark eyes. Around them the heavens blazed with constellations. Never had the minister seen them so multitudinous or so resplendent. Never before had the firmament seemed so alive to him. He could almost hear it breathe. And beneath the stars the little boat raced eastward, with the reef-points pattering on its tan sails.

Neither spoke. For the most part the minister avoided the girl's eyes, and sat nursing his wrath. The whole affair was ludicrous; but it meant the sudden ruin of his good name, at the very start of his career. This was the word he kept grinding between his teeth —"ruin," "ruin." Whenever it pleased this mad creature to set him ashore, he must write to Deacon Snowden for his boxes and resign all connection with Troy. But would he ever get rid of the scandal? Could he ever be sure that, to whatever distance he might flee, it would not follow him? Had he not better abandon his calling, once and for all? It was hard.

A star shot down from the Milky Way and disappeared in darkness behind the girl's shoulders. His eyes, following it, encountered hers. She left the tiller and came slowly forward.

"In three minutes we'll open Plymouth Sound," she said quietly, and then with a sharp gesture flung both arms out towards him. "Oh, lad, think better

o't an' turn back wi' me! Say you'll marry me, for I'm perishin' o' love!"

The moonshine fell on her throat and extended arms. Her lips were parted, her head was thrown back a little, and for the first time the young minister saw that she was a beautiful woman.

"Ay, look, look at me!" she pleaded. "That's what I've wanted 'ee to do all along. Take my hands: they'm shapely to look at and strong to work for 'ee."

Hardly knowing what he did, the young man took them; then in a moment he let them go—but too late; they were about his neck.

With that he sealed his fate for good or ill. He bent forward a little and their lips met.

So steady was the wind that the boat still held on her course; but no sooner had the girl received the kiss than she dropped her arms, walked off, and shifted the helm.

"Unfasten the sheet there," she commanded, "and duck your head clear."

As soon as their faces were set for home, the minister walked back to the cuddy roof and sat down to reflect. Not a word was spoken till they reached the harbour's mouth again, and then he pulled out his watch. It was half-past four in the morning.

Outside the Battery Point the girl hauled down the sails and got out the sweeps; and together they pulled up under the still sleeping town to the minister's quay-door. He was clumsy at this work, but she instructed him in whispers, and they managed to reach the ladder as the clocks were striking five. The tide was far down by this time, and she held the boat close to the ladder while he prepared to climb. With his foot on the first

round, he turned. She was white as a ghost, and trembling from top to toe.

"Nance—did you say your name was Nance?"

She nodded.

"What's the matter?"

"I'll—I'll let you off, if you want to be let off."

"I'm not sure that I do," he said, and stealing softly up the ladder, stood at the top and watched her boat as she steered it back to Ruan.

Three months after, they were married, to the indignant amazement of the minister's congregation. It almost cost him his pulpit, but he held on and triumphed. There is no reason to believe that he ever repented of his choice, or rather of Nance's. To be sure, she had kidnapped him by a lie; but perhaps she wiped it out by fifty years of honest affection. On that point, however, I, who tell the tale, will not dogmatise.

WHICH?

THE scene was a street in the West End of London, a little south of Eaton Square: the hour just twenty-five minutes short of midnight.

A wind from the North Sea had been blowing all day across the Thames marshes, and collecting what it could carry; and the shop-keepers had scarcely drawn their iron shutters before a thin fog drifted up from lamp-post to lamp-post and filled the intervals with total darkness—all but one, where, half-way down the street on the left-hand side, an enterprising florist had set up an electric lamp at his private cost, to shine upon his window and attract the attention of rich people as they drove by on their way to the theatres. At nine o'clock he closed his business: but the lamp shone on until midnight, to give the rich people another chance, on their way home, of reading that F. Stillman was prepared to decorate dinner-tables and ball-rooms, and to supply bridal bouquets or mourning wreaths at short notice.

The stream of homeward-bound carriages had come to a sudden lull. The red eyes of a belated four-wheeler vanished in the fog, and the florist's lamp flung down its ugly incandescent stare on an empty pavement. Himself in darkness, a policeman on the other side of the street flashed his lantern twice, closed the slide and halted for a moment to listen by an area railing.

Halting so, he heard a rapid footfall at the upper corner of the street. It drew nearer. A man suddenly stepped into the circle of light on the pavement, as if upon a miniature stage; and as suddenly paused to gaze upward at the big white globe.

He was a middle-aged man, dressed in an ill-fitting suit of broad-cloth, with a shabby silk hat and country-made boots. He stared up at the globe, as if to take his bearings in the fog; then pulled out a watch.

As the light streamed down upon its dial, a woman sidled out from the hollow of a shop-door behind him, and touched his elbow.

"Deary!" she began. "Going home, deary?"

"Heh? Let me alone, please," said the man roughly. "I am not that sort." She had almost slipped her arm in his before he turned to speak; but now she caught it away, gasping. Mock globes danced before his eyes and for the moment he saw nothing but these: did not see that first she would have run, then moved her hands up to cover her face. Before they could do so he saw it, all white and damned.

"Annie!"

"Oh, Willy . . ." She put out a hand as if to ward him off, but dropped both arms before her and stood, swaying them ever so slightly.

"So this . . . So *this* . . ." He choked upon the words.

She nodded, hardening her eyes to meet his. "He left me. He sent no money——"

"I see."

"I was afraid."

"Afraid?"

"Afraid to do it . . . suddenly . . . to put an end.

. . . It's not so easy to starve, really. Oh, Willy, can't you hit me?"

He seemed to be reflecting. "I—I say," he said abruptly, "can't we talk? Can't we get away somewhere and talk?"

Her limp arms seemed to answer: they asked, as plainly as words, "What is there to say?"

"I don't know. . . . Somewhere out of this infernal light. I want to think. There must be somewhere, away from this light. . . ." He broke off. "At home, now, I can think. I am always thinking at home."

"At home . . ." the woman echoed.

"And you must think too?"

"Always: everywhere."

"Ah!" he ran on, as one talking against time:" but what do you suppose I think about, nine times out of ten? Why"—and he uttered it with an air of foolish triumph—"of the chances that we might meet . . . and what would happen. Have you ever thought of that?"

"Always: everywhere . . . of that . . . and the children."

"Grace looks after them."

"I know. I get word. She is kind."

"You think of them?"

"Don't, Willy!"

He harked back. "Do you know, whenever I've thought of it . . . the chance of our meeting . . . I've wondered what I should say. Hundreds and hundreds of times I've made up my mind what to say. Why, only just now—I've come from the theatre: I still go to the theatre sometimes: it's a splendid thing

to distract your thoughts: takes you out of *yourself*—*Frou-Frou,* it was . . . the finest play in the world . . . next to *East Lynne.* It made me cry, to-night, and the people in the pit stared at me. But one mustn't be ashamed of a little honest emotion, before strangers. And when a thing comes *home* to a man. . . . So you've thought of it too—the chance of our running against one another?"

"Every day and all the day long I've gone fearing it: especially in March and September, when I knew you'd be up in town buying for the season. All the day long I've gone watching the street ahead of me . . . watching in fear of you. . . ."

"But I never guessed it would happen like this." He stared up irritably, as though the lamp were to blame for upsetting his calculations. The woman followed his eyes.

"Yes . . . the lamp," she assented. "Something held my face up to it, just now, when I wanted to hide. It's like as if our souls were naked under it, and there is nothing to say."

"Eh? but there is. I tell you I've thought it out so often! I've thought it all out, or almost all; and that can't mean nothing." He cleared his throat. "I've made allowances, too——" he began magnanimously.

But for the moment she was not listening. "Yes, yes . . ." She had turned her face aside and was gazing out into the darkness. "Look at the gas-jets, Willy—in the fog. What do they remind you of? That Christmas-tree . . . after Dick was born. . . . Don't you remember how he mistook the oranges on it for lanterns and wanted to blow them out . . . how he kicked to get at them. . . ."

"It's odd: I was thinking of Dick, just now, when you—when you spoke to me. The lamp put me in mind of him. I was wondering what it cost. We have nothing like it at home. Of course, if I bought one for the shop, people would talk—'drawing attention,' they'd say, after what has happened. But I thought that Dick, perhaps . . . when he grows up and enters the business . . . perhaps he might propose such a thing, and then I shan't say no. I should carry it off lightly. . . . After all, it's the shop it would call attention to . . . not the house. And one must advertise in these days."

She was looking at him steadily now. "Yes," she assented, "people would talk."

"And they pity me. I do hate to be pitied, in that way. Even the people up here, at the old lodgings. . . . I won't come to them again. If I thought the children. . . . One never can tell how much children know——"

"Don't, Willy!"

He plunged a hand into his pocket. "I daresay, now, you're starving?"

Her arms began to sway again, and she laughed quietly, hideously. "Don't—don't—don't! I make money. That's the worst. I make money. Oh, why don't you hit me? Why was you always a soft man?"

For a moment he stood horribly revolted. But his weakness had a better side, and he showed it now.

"I say, Annie . . . is it so bad?"

"It is hell."

"'Soft'?" he harked back again. "It might take some courage to be soft."

She peered at him eagerly; then sighed. "But you haven't that sort of courage, Willy."

"They would say . . ." he went on musing, "I wonder what they would say? . . . Come back to the lamp," he cried with sudden peevishness. "Don't look out there . . . this circle of light on the pavement . . . like a map of the world."

"With only our two shadows on it."

"If it were all the world. . . ." He peered around, searching the darkness. "If there were nothing to concern us beyond, and we could stay always inside it. . . ."

"—With the light shining straight down on us, and our shadows close at our feet, and so small! But directly we moved beyond they would lengthen, lengthen. . . ."

"'Forsaking all other'—that's what the Service says. And what does that mean if we cannot stand apart from all and render account to each other only? I tell you I've made allowances. I didn't make any in the old days, being wrapped up in the shop and the chapel, and you not caring for either. There was fault on my side: I've come to see that."

"I'd liefer you struck me, Willy, instead of making allowances."

"Oh, come, that's nonsense. It seems to me, Annie, there's nothing we couldn't help to mend together. It would never be the same, of course: but we can understand . . . or at least overlook." In his magnanimity he caught at high thoughts. "This light above us—what if it were the Truth?"

"Truth doesn't overlook," she answered, with a hopeless scorn which puzzled him. "No, no," she went

on rapidly, yet more gently, "Truth knows of the world outside, and is wakeful. If we move a step our shadows will lengthen. They will touch all bright things—they will fall across the children. Willy, we cannot move!"

"I see. . . ."

"Ah?" She craned forward and almost touched his arm again.

"Annie, it comes to me now—I see for the first time how happy we might have been. How came we two to kill love?"

The woman gave a cry, almost of joy. Her fingers touched his sleeve now. "We have not killed love. We—I—had stunned him: but (Oh, I see!) he has picked up his weapons again and is fighting. He is bewildered here, in this great light, and he fights at random . . . fights to make you strong and me weak, you weak and me strong. We can never be one again, never. One of us must fall, must be beaten . . . he does not see this, but Oh, Willy, he fights . . . he fights!"

"He shall fight for you. Annie, come home!"

"No, no—for you—and the children!"

"Come!"

"Think of the people!" She held him off, shaking her head, but her eyes were wistful, intent upon his. "You have lived it down. . . . It would all begin again. Look at me . . . think of the talk. . . ."

"Let them say what they choose. . . . I wonder what they would say. . . ."

The Policeman stepped forward and across the road way. He had heard nothing, and completely misunderstood all he had seen.

"Come, you must move on there, you two!" he commanded harshly.

Suddenly, as he said it, the light above was extinguished.

"Hallo!" He paused, half-way across. "Twelve o'clock already! Then what's taken my watch?"

A pair of feet tip-toed away in the darkness for a few yards, then broke into a nervous run.

As a matter of fact it still wanted five minutes of midnight. And while the Policeman fumbled for his watch and slipped back the slide of his lantern, the white flame leaped back into the blind eye above and blazed down as fiercely as ever.

"Something wrong with the connection, I suppose," said the Policeman, glancing up and then down at the solitary figure left standing under the lamp.

"Why, hallo! . . ." said he again.

But which was it?—the man or the woman?

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